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## Jack Harkaway, the Magician.



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# Jack Harkaway, the Magician.

## CHAPTER I.

### A DEEP-LAID PLOT.

THE news of the escape, or rescue—call it what you will—of the three desperadoes, soon became known.

Emily and Mrs. Harvey were much alarmed.

A grand consultation was held, the result of which was that the Prince of Limbi was sent into the town to take rooms for the whole party.

And the next day they all quitted the villa.

The hotel in which our friends had secured apartments, was a large, straggling building, right at the extremity of the ill-built street which formed the chief part of the town.

Mr. Mole had been very particular when they went there in his inquiries about the brigands.

The urbane proprietor, with many low bows, assured his excellency, the Englishman, that there was not the slightest possibility of their being molested.

Such a thing had never happened at his hotel.

By ten o'clock, the day after the masquerade, hardly a person was stirring in the town.

But cautious footsteps may be heard, and any one might have seen three figures creeping quietly down the street on the side opposite the hotel.

Right over against that building they paused.

"That is the place," said one of the three, a giant almost in size.

"Curse them! they always manage to get comfortable quarters, while I am an out-cast," said another, who spoke like an Englishman.

"Death, gentlemen! What better quarters can you desire than my cave, in which you have spent several pleasant evenings?"

"Bah! Captain Mathias, you have never tasted the sweets of civilization."

"And, Signor Hunstani, how much the better are you through having tasted those sweets?"

"Peace, peace!" growled the giant. "Let us unite in thought and action, and to-night obtain our long-sought revenge."

"Well, Toro, I am sure I don't want to quarrel with any one, except Harkaway."

"Curse him, and especially that American."

"Hush! let your curses be not loud but deep; you'll awake the town if you swear so."

"Have I not good cause to? Has he not beaten and put me to shame?"

"And have I not suffered equal pain and shame? Yet I am content to bide my time; you should have patience, Toro."

"Come—come, to business, my friends," said Mathias. "There is the house where our foe resides. How are we to proceed?"

"Quietly; hush!" said Hunston.

"Let me get once inside, and I care not if all the street hears," muttered Toro.

"Seriously, though, let us consider how to get into this place," said Hunston.

"There's the door facing us."

"But have you the key?"

"No, but I could easily send my foot through that plank," growled Toro.

"Certainly, and you would undoubtedly alarm the whole household, whereas we wish to catch them sleeping."

"Well, then, how about the windows?"

"Too high to reach," said Hunston, "unless we had a ladder."

"And I doubt if such a thing can be found in the town," interposed Captain Mathias.

"Well, then, let us see what there is at the back of the house. Captain, you have eyes like a cat or an owl; just glance up and down the street to see if there is anyone about."

The Greek looked in all directions.

"Not even a mouse is stirring," said he.

So the three villains, drawing their cloaks closely around them, stole silently away from the shelter of the friendly doorway, where the foregoing conversation had taken place, and proceeded around to the back of the hotel.

To reach the point desired, they had, of course, to cross the road, which was tolerably wide, and then skirt a kind of paddock.

But surely that is not a shadow, which as they move, moves also from an adjoining doorway, and follows them.

Like them, it is wrapped in a cloak; like them, it stalks along slowly and erect, but unlike them, it makes no noise.

The three villains go slowly, and the shadow, or substance, whatever it may be, keeps the same pace, till they reach the open field back of the hotel.

Hunston, Toro, and the Greek then stand looking toward the hotel, but the shadow sinks down out of sight.

Another hasty look around, and then the Greek brigand pronounced that they were safe.

"No fear of being interrupted here."

"Well, now let us settle," said Toro; "I am anxious to be at them."

"But see," said Hunston, "there are lights moving; it is not safe yet."

"Not till half an hour after midnight."

"And now—"

"It is half-past ten o'clock."

"Two hours," groaned Toro.

"Better wait four than fail," said Hunston.

"Cold blooded Englishman, what know you of the furious rate at which my blood boils in my veins? In that house is the man who struck me to the earth."

"Wait two hours—then you may have a good chance of paying off that score."

"And I will, too, with greater interest than ever usurer charged his hapless client. I wonder which room this cursed American sleeps in?"

"The third room on the right hand side of the first corridor, where you ascend the great stair-case."

Captain Mathias said this as promptly and positively as though he himself had shown our friends to bed.

After a pause, he continued:

"Mr. and Mrs. Harkaway have the first room; Mr. and Mrs. Harvey the second; the third is a double-bedded apartment, one couch being occupied by the American, the other by the two boys."

"You seem to have pretty exact information, captain," said Hunston.

"Yes, there is little going on there that does not come to my ears. One of the porters is a spy in my employ."

"Why did you not get a key from him?"

"I have one; it opens the back door."

Toro now turned to his companions.

"And where do you propose to pass the two hours that elapse?"

"At the bottom of yonder field is a thicket where we shall be free from observation. We can spoke our pipes there. By the by, the patrol goes around about midnight."

"We must be cautious," said Hunston.

"Come along, then."

The three villains then walked off in the direction of the thicket where they were to hide.

A minute afterwards their shadows arose from the ditch where he had been crouching, and stood looking after them long after they were lost in the gloom.

"Just in time," muttered the so-called shadow, who was in good truth as substantial flesh and blood as any in Greece. "If I had not wandered hither in search of my daughter, probably half a dozen murders would have been committed. However, I'll thwart the rascals, as sure as my name is Petrus."

For Petrus it was, from Magic Island.

He stood there in deep thought for a few moments.

"I must warn some of the people in the hotel; but I should like to get this business over with without alarming Mrs. Harkaway or the other lady. The question is, how?"

He reached the front door of the hotel, and pulled at the bell handle.

After an interval of two or three minutes, a light shone through the key-hole, and a voice asked:

"Who is there?"

"A traveler, in search of food and bed."

Then the door was unbolted, and the traveler entered.

"Is the proprietor of the hotel in bed yet?" he asked.

"I don't know, sir."

"He must be aroused at once. I have important news for him from a distant land."

The porter stared, but did not seem inclined to call the proprietor; noticing which, Petrus said:

"I shall be sorry to alarm all the house,

when I only want one person; but if you don't quickly bring him, I'll ring half a dozen of these bells at such a rate that he'll think the house is on fire."

Seeing the stranger was in earnest, the porter went to the proprietor's room and soon returned with him to the hall.

"I should like to have a few words with you in private, sir," said the traveler, with a strong emphasis on the words we have italicized.

"Certainly. You may go to bed, Theodor-us."

The porter somewhat sulkily retired to a kind of pantry, where he slept, and the proprietor of the hotel, softly following, turned the key upon him.

"I have my doubts about that fellow," he said, as he returned. "But now, sir, what is your pleasure with me?"

Petrus at once told him what he had heard, and great was the alarm of the hotel keeper.

"What shall we do? Send for the police?"

"No," said Petrus.

"What then? I cannot allow my guests to be murdered. Why, these scoundrels have already made an attempt on Mr. Harkaway and his friends at a masquerade."

Just at that moment a guttural voice was heard singing:

"Ole Ikey Mole

Was a lushey ole soul,

And a lushey ole soul was he."

"Now, den, you nigger, be quiet," said another voice.

"Who are these people?" asked Petrus.

"Two black men in attendance on the Harkaway party," said the proprietor.

"Just the men. I know a little of them. I have fought side by side with them. Now, I have a proposal to make, which is that we put these brigands to flight in a ludicrous manner, which will annoy them more than being beaten in fight. Myself and the black men will do it with your assistance and permission."

"Anything, so that there is no bloodshed."

"That I will guarantee. Please call the two worthy darkskins."

Sunday and Monday were called and acquainted with the state of affairs.

"What, Massa Petrus," said Sunday, in surprise, "what you do here?"

Sunday rolled his eyes fearfully as he listened to the details of the plot.

"Gorra, massa, I'd like to tar and feather dat big rascal."

The hotel keeper led the way to the corridor, and pointed out the sleeping apartments of the Harkaway party.

Petrus then held another short consultation with the two black men and the hotel keeper, the result of which was that the latter retired, leaving Sunday, Monday and Petrus to work their will with the invaders when they appeared.

And then, as there was but little time to spare, they set to work with a will to make all the necessary preparations.

Over each door they screwed into the wall an iron hook, to which was attached a pulley and a cord.

Then they went into the lower regions and hunted through the storerooms.

The first place they lighted upon was a kind of painter's shop, full of paints, oils, and such like things.

"Dis is jes' de shop for to cook de goose of dem willins," said Sunday.

"And here's de pots to cook 'em in," said Monday, pointing to some iron kettles resembling pails, but made so that the bottoms could be removed.

The pails, as we will call them, were something like sugar loaves, with the tops cut off and turned base upward.

When full, the weight of the liquid kept the bottom in its place, but it was evident that if the bottom was moved, as it easily could be, the contents would escape.

Petrus, after an inspection, pronounced them "just the thing," adding:

"Now we must fill them with tar."

"No—no," said Monday. "Put tar in one, werry hot; in nodder put dis here paint, also werry hot; and in de oder put water, bilin' hot."

"Good!"

Then the three sat down by the large fireplace in the kitchen, and deliberately began their cooking.

Monday devoted his attention to the heating of several pounds of mixed paint.



Sunday boiled a barrel of tar, while Petrus attended to a large cauldron of water.

Ten minutes before the hands of the clock pointed to half-past twelve, all the cooks had completed their work.

The paint, tar, and water, all at boiling heat, had been placed in the iron pails with the movable bottoms, and one of these had been hung over each bedroom door.

The hot water over Harkaway's door, the paint over Harvey's, and the tar over that in which the two boys and Jefferson reposed.

A string was attached to each pail, and passed over a pulley, the end being conveyed to a recess where the three watchers were concealed.

They were armed.

Sunday, Monday, and Petrus each had a six-chambered revolver, loaded.

Then came the clang of the old-fashioned clock as it proclaimed half-past twelve.

Breathless silence prevailed both inside the house and out.

"Lights out," whispered Petrus, when, after a short pause, a slight grating noise was heard at the back door.

In an instant all was darkness, except that the moon shone through a narrow window at the extreme end of the corridor.

A few minutes afterwards, Petrus, who was watching, saw three dark figures come gliding into the long passage.

The first was a tall, bulky figure—Toro.

The second the Greek, and the third was evidently Hunston.

A plan of operations had been agreed upon—that was quite certain; for Toro, without the least hesitation, proceeded to Jefferson's door, the Greek placing himself outside Harvey's apartment, while Hunston stationed himself at the room occupied by Harkaway.

Then they waited for a signal, evidently intending to rush in simultaneously.

"Now!" said Hunston, in a loud whisper.

"Now!" echoed Petrus.

Before the brigands could rush into the rooms occupied by those they sought to destroy, Petrus pulled the three strings he held in his hand, and, good Heaven! what a spluttering and swearing at once commenced.

Hunston was drenched and scalded.

"A million curses!" he roared.

"Help! Look here, Toro."

But Toro could not look.

A deluge of hot tar had streamed over his head, filling eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, saturating his hair, and running down inside his clothing.

"Furies!" he screamed, "I'll have the life of the villain who has done this! Mathias, out with your knife, man!"

But the poor Greek was utterly cowed. The paint had destroyed all his senses save that of feeling, which was fully exercised.

Hunston, although severely scalded, managed to keep a certain proportion of his wits about him.

"Come, lads, quick! as you value your lives!" he exclaimed. "Away! we must not risk capture."

He endeavored to drag them away.

At that moment, however, another actor appeared on the scene.

This was Nero.

That wide-awake member of the monkey tribe had been doomed to share Sunday's apartments, where a neat bed had been made for him in one corner.

Hearing a noise, and, perhaps, missing his companion (brother, Jefferson said), he came down, carrying in his dexter paw a well-filled pillow.

He seemed to recognize Toro at once.

The valorous ape leaped forward and gave his Italian foe such a bolstering as Toro had never before heard of, while the three spectators laughed and applauded loudly.

Crack!

The ticking of the pillow gave way, and a shower of feathers enveloped the unhappy son of Italy, whose oaths and execrations were literally smothered.

"Golly, ain't he a downy cove?" said Monday.

At this juncture Hunston managed to grasp his companions by the hand, and dragged them down stairs and out at the back door.

Only just in time, however, for Jefferson, hearing the noise, rushed out, in scanty costume, it is true, but fully armed with pistol and bowie knife, and eager for the fray.

"What is the matter?" he demanded, looking with surprise at Petrus.

Petrus explained, briefly.

Jefferson rushed to the door and fired two

shots after the fugitives, who, however, managed to get away.

Then the door was securely bolted, and after the affair had been explained to all the alarmed inmates of the house, they retired to bed, but not before Harkaway and his friends had shaken Petrus warmly by the hand, with a promise that he should see his beloved daughter in the morning.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BRIGANDS' CONSPIRACY—THE ARAB ASTROLOGER—HARVEY'S FIRST APPEARANCE AS A MESMERIST.

"THEY are making fresh efforts to get Mathias out," said Dick Harvey to his friend Harkaway.

This was the beginning of a conversation which took place at the residence of the Harkaway party just three days after the daring and audacious attack on the hotel.

Mathias had been captured by the patrol while endeavoring to escape and thrown in jail again.

"Hang their impudence!" said Jefferson.

"Will nothing daunt them? I wish one of them had entered my room the other night; I would have held him faster than it seems the prisons here can."

"Those two restless vagabonds are up to their games again," exclaimed Dick.

"You mean Toro?"

"Ay, and Hunston."

"What have they done now?" demanded Jefferson.

"They have been trying to tamper with the jailers."

"How was it discovered?"

"The traitor, whoever he may be, let fall a letter he was carrying to Mathias."

"That's lucky. Well, did they discover anything?"

"No; it was written in cipher."

"The cunning rascals!"

"Now I've got more news for you," Dick went on to say.

"Out with it, then."

"You have heard of the Arab who tells fortunes in the town?"

"Mehemed Sadan, the great necromancer?"

"Yes. Would you be surprised to learn that he is one of Mathias' band?"

"Why, those scoundrels have a finger in every pie."

"True," said Harvey. "Now, I have a notion to offer you. I propose that we go there and test the truth of what I say."

"How?"

"I'll tell you that as we go. Are you agreed?"

"I'm willing," said Harkaway, promptly; "anything for a little excitement."

Off they went.

Mehemed Sadan, the Arabian magician, carried on his occult practices in a house in the best part of the town, and all his surroundings tended to show that the "black art" had proved a most profitable commerce to him.

When Harkaway, Jefferson, and Harvey arrived there, they were ushered into the presence of the magician by a negro fancifully attired, wearing silver bands around his wrists and ankles, from which dangled chains with small bells attached.

Mehemed Sadan was seated on a high-backed chair close by a long table, on which was a long cloth of black velvet covered with mystic signs and letters, which were all so much Greek to the visitors.

The room was filled with all kinds of things calculated to impress the vulgar with superstitious awe.

The effect was altogether lost upon Dick Harvey, for he made a point of nodding at the Arab astrologer in the most familiar manner.

"Morning to you, old fellow," he said, cheerfully.

"Salaam, sahib," responded the necromancer, gravely.

"Halloo!" said Jefferson, opening his eyes, "why, this Arab talks Hindustani."

"Leave it to me," said Dick Harvey, in an undertone.

The Arab then said some few words to the company generally, which the company generally could make rather less of than if they had been addressed in Chinese.

"He's talking no known language under the sun," said Harkaway. "It's my opinion he has got the cheek to talk regular right-down gibberish to us."

It was true.

The words, or sounds, let us say, which the necromancer was uttering, only sounded but too much like "hokey-pokey kickeraboo abracada-

bra," and the rest of the mysterious sounds with which the conjuror at juvenile parties seeks to invest his performance with additional wonder, for the benefit of his youthful audience.

Dick was in a rage.

"Confound his impudence," he exclaimed, "I'll give him one."

So he let out in this wise:

"Chi ki hi-u-thundrinold umbuggo—canardly keep my thievinirons off your wool—I should like to land you just one on the smeller and tap your claret."

At which, to the surprise of the magician, the visitors burst out laughing.

The Arab necromancer now asked them, in very good Greek, the object of their visit.

"We shall not understand much if we are addressed in Greek," said Harkaway; "try him in Italian."

And then they found that the conjuror spoke Italian as well, or better, than any of the party.

"Can you tell me," said Jack Harkaway, by way of beginning business, "if I shall succeed in the present object of my desires or not?"

The magician bowed his head gravely.

Then he opened a large volume covered with mystic characters.

For a minute or two he appeared to be lost in deep study, and then he gave his reply.

"Your desires tend to the downfall of some lawless men, I find," he said, watching them keenly, as if he expected to see them jump up in surprise at his words.

"They do."

"And you will not succeed."

"Does your art tell you where I shall fail?" asked Jack.

"No; I only see disappointment and trouble for you and yours," returned the conjuror.

"Dear—dear, how very shocking," exclaimed Harkaway, winking at Harvey.

"Dreadful!" added Dick, with a terrified look, and putting his tongue out at the magician.

"What else does your art tell you?" demanded Jefferson, who was anxious to know how far the necromancer would venture to try and humbug them.

"I see here," said the conjuror, drawing his finger along a line of something on the open "Book of Fate," that looked like Arabia, "I see here that your lives are menaced, one and all, through the keeping of a wretched man under restraint."

The visitors looked at each other and exchanged a smile.

"Your art is at fault," said Jefferson; "we have no one under restraint."

"You are in some way connected with it."

"Wrong again."

The wizard looked uncomfortable at this.

"Strange," he said, "and yet I read it here as clearly as you might yourself if it were written in a book."

"You are mistaken," said Jefferson; "we are in no way concerned in anything of the kind."

The wizard pored over the mystic tome again.

"I can say no more then," he said, "for here you are clearly indicated. You, especially, are mentioned as being the immediate cause of his downfall."

"How am I indicated?" demanded Jefferson.

"By the letter J."

"Which you take for?"

"Your initial."

"Humph! not far out. What an audacious humbug the fellow is," said Jefferson to Jack.

Now, during the foregoing scene, young Jack and Harry Girdwood had joined the party, and Dick Harvey was observed to be in close conversation with them.

At this point Harvey turned from the two lads towards Jefferson.

"The astrologer is right," he said, gravely.

"What the devil do you mean?" exclaimed Jefferson.

"You are right, sir," added Dick to the magician himself.

The latter bowed.

"I doubt it not," he said; "the stars do not speak falsely."

"No—no."

"And so you may convince your friend that I say no more nor less than the truth."

"I can," said Dick, in a voice as solemn as that of the necromancer himself; "for I am a mesmerist, and I have here with me a clairvoyant of great power."

The conjuror started.

"Where?"

"Here."

He held out his hand to young Jack and led him forward.

Harkaway and Jefferson stared again.



"Halloo!" ejaculated old Jack; "what the deuce is Madcap Dick up to now?"

"Can't hazard a guess," said Jefferson.

"Mesmerism cannot read the future as my art does," said the necromancer.

"It can," said Dick; "it corroborates all you have said. I'll give you a proof of it before our friends here."

And then, before he could object, Dick made a mesmeric pass or two across young Jack's face, and immediately it appeared to take effect.

Young Jack's eyes were closed, and for a moment there played about his mouth a merry smile of mischief, and then he appeared to be in a state of coma.

Never was mesmerism effected with such little trouble.

"Now tell me," said Dick, with all the tricks of manner of the professional mesmerists, "tell me to what this person alludes?"

"He speaks of Mathias, the brigand chief."

"True," said Dick; "and will Mathias escape?"

"No."

"You hear," said Dick, turning towards the necromancer.

"I do."

"And therefore it is useless to try and effect the liberation of this Mathias?"

"Quite," returned young Jack. "The wizard here is trying all he can himself, but he will be discovered by the police and thrown into prison."

"Hah!" exclaimed Dick, "do you hear that?"

"I do," returned the necromancer, "but it is false."

"It is true," said Dick. "So beware."

"Ask him more," said the wizard, eagerly, "ask him more."

"What shall I ask?" demanded Dick.

"Ask him—yet, mark me, I don't believe a word of it—ask him, for curiosity, what follows?"

"Follows what?"

"What he said last."

"You mean what follows being thrown into prison?" he said, deliberately.

"Yes."

"Do you hear?" said Dick.

"Yes, master," responded young Jack.

"Speak, then."

By this time Harkaway the elder and Jefferson began of course to see what they were driving at, and they became just as much interested as the wizard himself in what young Jack was going to say.

"What follows," said young Jack, "is too dreadful to look at."

"Speak," said Dick, with a furious pass across the lad's face. "Speak, I command you. What follows?"

"I see the wizard hanging by the neck—there," and young Jack pointed straight before him.

The necromancer looked as unhappy as possible when he heard young Jack's words.

"Do you know enough," asked Dick Harvey, "or would you learn more yet?"

The wizard essayed to smile, but it was a sickly attempt, and it died away in a ghastly manner.

"I cannot believe a word of what you say, but still let him speak on."

Dick frowned.

"If you are a scoffer," he said, sternly, "my clairvoyant will not speak."

"I am no scoffer," returned the necromancer; "speak on."

"What would you know?"

"When is my danger to begin? Let him say that."

"Speak," said Dick, making mesmeric passes across Jack's face.

"He need fear nothing at present," said young Jack.

The wizard drew a long breath of relief.

"The police are below," continued young Jack, "but for ten minutes there is no danger."

"Ten minutes!"

"Yes."

"And after?" gasped the wizard, breathlessly.

"Then he is doomed," said young Jack in sepulchral tones. "The wizard will be numbered with the dead."

Thereupon, the necromancer was taken suddenly queer, and he retreated with a few confused words of excuse.

"He's gone," said Dick, laughing boisterously.

They pushed aside the curtains where the magician had disappeared, and found that there was a back staircase.

"There he goes, there he goes!" cried Harry Girdwood, excitedly.

"Yes, and he has left his skin," said young Jack.

Upon the stairs was the long, black velvet robe covered with tin-foil ornaments, with which the necromancer was wont to frighten the ignorant and superstitious peasants, who came to consult him, out of their wits.

"I'll frighten old Mole with this," said young Jack.

"I don't suppose that they'll try to frighten us again into helping Mathias, the brigand chief, out of prison," said Harkaway, laughing.

"He shall hang as high as Haman," said Jefferson, sternly. "Of that I am so determined, that if there was no one else, I would willingly fix the noose myself. But hang he shall for murdering my poor and noble friend Brand."

### CHAPTER III.

THE CONDEMNED CELL—MATHIAS ESCAPED—WHERE HAS HE GONE?—THE BLOOD ON THE HEARTH—A TALE OF TERROR.

THE schemes set on foot by the friends of Mathias for his release were so many and so unceasing that the greatest precaution had to be taken to keep him in safety.

Rules were made and for awhile most rigidly enforced that not a soul was to be permitted to visit the prisoner; but the exception proves the rule, and there was an exception made in favor of a lady who came and pleaded so earnestly to the governor of the prison that he could not find the courage to refuse her.

The lady was shown into the cell which Mathias had lately occupied.

Lately? Yes.

The bird had flown.

But how had he got free?

Where had he gone?

Not a soul in the prison had the vaguest notion.

The jailer stared, and gaped like one in a dream.

"Where is Mathias?" demanded the woman.

"That's more than I can guess," responded the jailer, rubbing his eyes as if he could not believe their evidence.

"Have you mistaken the cell?"

"Not I."

"Has he been removed?"

"No."

She stared him straight in the face for a moment or two, and then she burst out into a fit of laughter.

"Ha-ha-ha! Why, he has escaped—he has escaped! He has beaten your vigilance—baffled you all in spite of locks, bolts and bars, and all your watching."

The jailer scratched his head.

"Let us look."

"Look! why, you can see everything here at a glance—everything. There are four walls. There is the bedstead; you can see under it. There is not room for a man to creep under there. There is the fireplace, and there is the window."

"Ha!" ejaculated the jailer, "the window."

"What then?"

"There is no other way; he must have escaped that way, undoubtedly."

"Nonsense," said the woman; "don't you see that it is too high up from the ground?"

"He has found a way to climb up there, then."

"But the iron bars are all in their places still."

"True," said the jailer, thoroughly puzzled, "true. Where can he have got to?"

"It is simple enough."

"How so?"

"He never attempted the window. He has walked out through the door being left open."

"Never!"

"Money can do more than that, and I rejoice at his freedom."

She moved to the door.

But the jailer held her back rather roughly.

"Stop you here," he said, rudely; "I shall have to report this to the governor, and you had better remain until the job has been investigated."

And before the startled woman could divine his intention, he swung to the door and shot the bolt.

Then pushing back the trap in the door, he added a few words through the grating.

"You'll be safer there," said he, "unless you can manage to get out as Mathias did. But the devil himself must have had a compact with Mathias!"

"At least leave me the light," she said, imploringly.

"Against orders," was all the answer vouchsafed.

The trap was shut.

The woman was left a prisoner, in total darkness.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is always something unpleasant in darkness, and this woman was by no means iron-nerved.

No sooner was she alone, than a painful sensation of uneasiness stole over her.

"They cannot keep me long here," she kept murmuring to herself; "I have done nothing, I am accused of no offense. The governor will set me at liberty as soon as he knows. Could anything be more unfortunate? Mathias was a prisoner and I was at liberty. Now Mathias is free, and I am a prisoner. Cruel fate to separate us. We are destined to be parted."

The gloom grew oppressive now.

She stood still, listening in painful silence for five minutes—five minutes that appeared to be so many hours.

A silence so solemn, so death-like, that she could hear the very beating of her heart.

This grew unbearable.

She groped her way around the cell to find the bed, and approaching the fire-place, she was suddenly startled by a sound.

A very faint noise, as of something dripping on the flag stones by her feet.

In the tomb-like silence then reigning, the faintest sound caused her to feel uncomfortable.

She listened awhile intently, asking herself what it could mean.

Drip—drip—drip!

It was strange.

When the light was there, she had not noticed it at all.

What could it be then that was only to be heard in the dark.

Was it fancy?

No.

It was too real.

There was no mistaking it.

If the oppressive gloom of the cell started strange sounds or strange fancies in her head, why should it take such a shape as that?

Why, indeed?

"Would to Heaven they were back with the light!" she exclaimed. "Will they never come?"

Just then, as though her earnest wish was heard and answered, a faint, thin streak of light was shot into the cell through the grated window above.

This was reflected from a chamber in the prison whose window was close by the window of this cell, and where a lamp had just been lighted.

The welcome ray shot straight across the cell where she stood by the fire-place, and she remarked that the dripping did not cease.

Drip—drip—drip!

She looked down.

"I see, I see," she shudderingly exclaimed, "it's raining, and the rain is falling down the chimney. How foolish of me to get alarmed about nothing."

Now the light, we have said, shot across the hearth, and here it was that the drip—drip—drip fell.

"Same as I thought."

As she muttered this to herself, she stretched forth her hand under the chimney, and the next drop fell upon it.

It was not water.

No, imperfect as was the light then, it sufficed to show her that upon her hand was a curiously dark stain.

Raising it nearer to her eyes, she examined it eagerly.

Then she shuddered, and exclaimed in a voice of terror;

"Blood!"

Yes, it was blood.

Pen cannot describe the terror of that wretched woman upon making this alarming discovery.

"Blood! Whose? Hah! whose blood! Whose but his—whose but the blood of my darling—my own Mathias?"

For a moment the thought completely unnerved her, and it was little short of a miracle that she kept from fainting.

But she fought bravely with the deathly horror stealing over her.

And kneeling on the hearth, she called up, yet in a gentle voice, lest she should give the alarm:

"Mathias—Mathias, my own! Do you not know me? Mathias, I say?"

She listened—listened eagerly for a reply.

And presently it came—a dull, hollow moan, a cry of anguish that chilled the blood in her heart, that froze the very marrow in her bones.



"Mathias, darling Mathias! answer me for the love of mercy; I shall die else."

Another moan was heard.  
Fainter and fainter even than the first.  
Yet full of pent-up suffering.  
A sound that told a whole tale of anguish.  
"Mathias, come to me," she called again.  
"Oh-h-h!"

A fearfully prolonged groan came down to her, louder than before, as if the sufferer had put all his remaining strength into the effort.

Then all was silent.  
The silence of death.  
Eagerly she listened, straining forward to catch the faintest breath.

But the voice above was stilled forever.  
And yet the drip, drip, drip continued, and as she stretched forward beneath the chimney, she caught the drops upon her face.

Then she could no longer thrust back conviction.

With a wild cry of terror she drew back, and groped her way around the room towards the door.

Her hand rested upon the grated trap, and she pushed it back with all her force, crying aloud for help as she did so.

"Help—help!" she shouted, with the energy of despair; "Mathias is dying."

She was wrong there.  
He was dead.

That wretched and misguided man would not trouble the authorities more.

His last breath had been drawn as she stood there listening to those awesome sounds.

What could be the solution of this mystery?

This would be known soon now, for the sounds of footsteps were distinctly heard now in the long stone corridors of the prison.

The jailers had given the alarm at once of the prisoner's escape, and the outlets of the prison were guarded in all directions, while a party was sent to the cell to investigate the matter thoroughly.

At the head of this party was the governor himself.

The time had appeared ten times as long to the unhappy woman as it was in reality.

"Help—help! Oh, help!" she cried.

At each effort she grew weaker and weaker. Her voice died away, and when they reached the door of the cell, they found her hanging by the bars of the grated window or trap more dead than alive.

"Show the light," ejaculated the governor.

And then as the rays fell upon that face pallid as the face of a corpse, save where the dark blood stains had settled, there was an involuntary exclamation of horror from all the beholders.

"Father of mercy," cried one of the men; "she has destroyed herself."

Such was the general idea.  
She had committed suicide.

In this, however, they were speedily undeceived.

To burst open the door and rush into the cell was but the work of a moment.

At this the woman rallied a little and recovered herself.

"What is the matter?" asked the governor.

"The chimney!" gasped the woman faintly.

"The chimney! Speak—explain."

"His blood—Mathias," she said; "see the chimney. I dare not look."

Two of the men by now had approached the chimney, and lowering the light they carried, one of them discovered a dark, ominous pool upon the hearth.

"Call the doctor; there is something more than meets the eye in this."

This order was promptly obeyed, and a surgeon was speedily in attendance.

A mere cursory glance convinced the man of skill that the blood upon the woman's face was not her own, and just as he arrived at this decision, drip—drip—drip, it began again upon the hearth.

The men looked at each other half scared, and the governor himself was scarcely more self-possessed.

The surgeon alone retained his presence of mind.

Snatching a lamp from one of the men, he thrust it as far as his arm could reach up the chimney and looked earnestly up.

"As I thought!" he exclaimed.

"What?" demanded the governor, eagerly.

"He is there."

"Who?"

"Who but the prisoner? Mathias is there—hopelessly stuck—wedged in. He has been trying to escape and has hurt himself."

The woman looked up at these words.

"Is it no worse?" she asked. "Is he badly hurt?"

"I cannot say yet," said the surgeon, "we must get him down first."

This proved a very difficult matter indeed.

The flue was so narrow that it was sheer madness to attempt climbing it.

Eagerly Mathias had pushed on, and finally got himself wedged inextricably.

He could neither move up nor down.

It was when he made this alarming discovery that his struggles became desperate, and in his wild efforts to free himself from his self-set trap, he tore and mutilated his flesh most cruelly.

The wounds and the want of air had done their work.

An hour's hard work succeeded in setting the prisoner free—or rather his body, for it was found that life had been extinct, according to the surgeon's report, before they had entered the cell.

And when they came to examine the clothes, they made a discovery which threw a light upon the whole affair.

A small scrap of paper, dirty and crumpled, was found in his pocket, upon which was some writing that was with great difficulty construed in this wise:

"The only hope is from the waterside. If you can reach the roof, and have the courage to make the plunge, freedom will be your reward."

How this note came there was never discovered.

With this dire catastrophe ended the efforts of the brigands to free their unhappy leader.

#### CHAPTER IV.

MR. MOLE VISITS THE WIZARD—THE MAGIC MIRROR AND THE LIEE-LIKE VISION—THE INCANTATION—THE CHARMED WIG.

"In point of fact, sir," said young Jack, to his tutor one morning, "it is about the only thing worth seeing here."

"What is it, Jack?"

"The wizard."

Mr. Mole looked very straight at his pupil upon this.

"What wizard, sir?" he said, severely. "What do you mean?"

"I mean the conjuror that Mr. Jefferson, and dad, and Uncle Dick went to see."

"When?"

"The other day; didn't they tell you about it?"

"No, sir."

When Mr. Mole addressed his pupil as "sir," young Jack knew pretty well that he thought he was being humbugged.

There is an old saying, "Jack was as good as his master."

Putting on a look of injured innocence, he called his comrade, Harry, to corroborate what he had said.

"That's quite true, Mr. Mole," said Harry Girdwood.

"That Mr. Jefferson went with Mr. Harkaway and Harvey to see a necromancer?"

"Yes."

"Preposterous!" quoth Mr. Mole. "Why, whatever is the world coming to next? We shall have them spirit-rapping and table-turning and such like muck, I suppose."

Jack looked serious.

"Then you don't believe in necromancy—that they can tell the past and the future by the aid of astrology?"

"Pickles!"

It would have astonished Messieurs Crosse and Blackwell themselves could they have heard what a deal that one word could convey when uttered by an Isaac Mole.

"Well, sir," said Harry Girdwood, seriously, "the wizard told us some very remarkable things indeed."

"What did he tell you?"

"Many things, many very wonderful things; but one of the most wonderful was about you, sir."

Mr. Mole stared.

"Don't you try to come the old soldier over me," said Mole.

Harry Girdwood protested that he held Mr. Mole in far too much respect to essay anything like coming the ancient military, or indeed anything else which might be construed into want of proper feeling.

Mr. Mole looked hard at him.

"And what did he say about me?"

"He said that all the intelligence of our party was centered in one person."

"Well."

"And that the initials of the person in question were I. M."

"Now, Jack."

"Sir."

"You two boys are conspiring against me."

"You are rather hard upon us, sir," said Harry Girdwood, with an injured look.

"Was I? Dear me, I didn't mean that," said poor Mole.

"But I'll go and see the wizard, as you call him."

"It might startle you, sir."

"Stuff and nonsense, Harry; my nerves are iron—iron, I tell you."

"They had need to be of steel, if you really mean to go."

"I'll go, and you shall go with me, Harry," said Mr. Mole; "and I'll unmask this wretched impostor before you."

And down came his clenched fist upon the table, with a fierceness and energy which made all the things leap up.

\* \* \* \* \*

The chamber of mystery was arranged with a keen eye to effect.

The present possessors of the place had preserved all the adjuncts which had looked so effective during the career of the necromancer, who had fled ignominiously.

A huge stuffed alligator swung from the ceiling, and the lighting of the room was effected by means of two or three swinging lamps that burned dimly blue, and made the place look sepulchral enough to satisfy the most morbid cravings for the horrible.

At the further end of the room was a "charmed circle," drawn with chalk, and set around it was a row of hideous, grinning skulls, which suggested that a hint had been borrowed from Zamiel, in "Der Freyschutz."

Besides these matters, there were several skeletons, stuck up in the most alarming attitudes.

Beside the chair was a large oval frame.

Upon the other side of the necromancer's chair was a heavy curtain or *portière* of cloth, covered with fantastic figures, and this was drawn aside a minute or so after Mr. Mole and Harry Girdwood appeared.

Then through the dark aperture, thus disclosed, the wizard hobbled in.

Not the wizard that we have seen before, but a little old man bent half double with age, and of whom little was to be seen, save a long white beard, and an appropriate robe.

He leant heavily upon a staff, and sank into his chair with evident pain and difficulty.

"What would ye with me?" said the necromancer, in feeble, querulous tones. "If ye have come to scoff again, begone ere I summon an evil spirit to blight ye."

Mr. Mole said nothing.

But when Harry Girdwood placed his hand nervously upon the old gentleman's arm, as if for protection, he felt that he was trembling slightly.

"He knows that we are English, you see," whispered Harry.

"Ye-es—ahem—ye-es."

"Do ye hear me?" said the wizard, sternly.

"Ye-es, oh, yes, sir," said Mr. Mole, who could not, for the life of him, get his voice above a whisper.

"Then answer."

"By all means; decidedly—quite so, I assure you."

"What? Beware! Do you mean to doubt and mock?"

"Oh, dear; yes."

"Hah!"

"That is, no. I really don't know what I am saying."

"Silence, or the fiends will have your ber-lud—ber-lud. Do you hear me?" shrieked the old wizard.

"Quite so. Dear—dear me, Harry," said Mr. Mole in an undertone, "what a very remarkable person, and I don't want to lose my ber-lud."

"What do you say now, sir? Do you feel sure that he is a humbug?"

"Of course not, but—"

At this juncture their conversation was cut short by a low, rumbling noise, that sounded like distant thunder.

As it continued, it increased in strength, until it actually became deafening.

Then suddenly, upon a sign from the necromancer, it ceased, and the man of mystery arose and pointed menacingly with his wand at Mole.

"Ye have thought well to neglect my warning," he said, in a voice which thrilled poor Mole strangely; "the secrets of your inmost heart are



known to me as to my familiar, and the penalty must be exacted.

Mole bounced up.

"Goodness me!"

Harry Girdwood laid a trembling hand upon the unhappy old gentleman, and played the part of Job's comforter once again with considerable effect.

"We are lost."

"Don't, Harry, don't! Pray, consider Mrs. Mole and the two babes."

"Try and melt him with a very humble apology."

"I will, I do!" exclaimed Mr. Mole, in great excitement. "I really did not mean it, Mr. Conjuror; 'pon my soul, I did not; and pray do not let your vampires take my ber-lud."

"Enough," said the wizard, sternly; "for once your ignorance shall excuse you. Now say what you would have with me and begone."

"I think I should like to go," Mole whispered to Harry.

"What for?"

"We have been a long while here," said Mr. Mole in the same tone; "Mrs. M. will be looking for me."

"Perhaps you don't feel quite comfortable here."

"Comfortable," said Mr. Mole, with a sickly smile; "oh, dear me, yes, I never was jollier."

"A little nervous, perhaps."

"My dear boy," said Mole, positively, "I have nerves of iron, literally iron. Ha! what noise is that?"

"Only the magician's evil spirit, or his 'familiar,' as he calls it."

"Strange," said Mole; "but sheer humbug, of course."

"Humbug?"

"Hush!" exclaimed Mr. Mole, anxiously.

Bang, went that deafening thunder again, and Mr. Mole hopped towards the door.

Harry Girdwood followed him closely up.

"You are uncomfortable, Mr. Mole."

"Not at all; nerves of adamant, Harry."

The latter laughed.

Never was there such an audacious humbug as Isaac Mole.

"You see that frame, sir, beside the wizard's chair?" said Girdwood.

"Yes," replied Mr. Mole; "what of it?"

"He showed us some marvels there last time."

"What is it?"

"A magic mirror."

"You must have been thoroughly well cheated; now what could he have shown you there?"

"Wonders," replied Harry, impressively; "you, amongst other marvels."

"Me?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, sir, that you appeared before us as plainly as I see you now."

Mr. Mole certainly looked serious at this.

"He can show you any one you want to see," said Harry.

"Never!"

"Try him."

"I will," said Mr. Mole, with a show of determination, but shaking all over.

"Now, oh sceptic, what proof of my lore would ye have? Would ye know something of yourself?"

"No."

"Yes," said Harry Girdwood for him promptly.

The wizard inclined his head gravely, and opened a large volume before him upon the table.

After poring over this for a time, he said the following doggerel in a deep bass voice:

"The doom of Mole is understood,  
For evermore to walk on wood;  
Though upon macadam or stone,  
Yet he shall walk on wood alone."

Let him march out on asphalt—tile,  
In orange groves his thoughts beguile;  
Where'er he be, the fate of Mole's  
To scud through life upon bare poles."

This peculiar incantation had its effect somewhat increased by soft music.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Mole, "it didn't want a wizard to tell me that."

"What, sir?" demanded Harry, innocently.

"About my wooden legs; my infirmity is visible to everybody."

"But how could he know?"

"By looking."

"Still sceptical," said the wizard, who had very sharp ears; "shall I consult my book again?"

"No—no," said Mr. Mole, uneasily.

But Harry Girdwood said "yes."

He did not want to end the scene yet.

"What would you?" demanded the magician, sternly.

Harry commenced to whisper to Mr. Mole.

"Come, sir, pluck up courage, and find out something about yourself. You know the past—why not ask him about the future?"

"He might be rude enough to say something unpleasant, Harry. However, I'll try him."

Then with a very polite bow Mr. Mole asked:

"Can you tell me, Mr. Magician, what my ultimate fate is?"

The necromancer took two steps forward and seized Mr. Mole's hand.

"I find that the line of life is tinged with the hue of blood," said he, in solemn tones, after a lengthened inspection of the palm.

"Dear me, how unpleasant—I washed my hands not long ago."

"Man, do you think you can wash away the decrees of fate or sponge out the solemn words written by the stars? You are an Englishman?"

"Certainly."

"Already six Englishmen have sought me, and each of the six died a terrible death. What says the book?"

"A terrible death on this green earth,  
With never the slightest chance of Heaven,  
Let him curse the day—the hour of his birth,  
The English victim numbered seven."

"And you are *Number Seven*, Mr. Mole. May all the powers of Heaven and earth preserve me from such a terrible doom as yours."

Mr. Mole almost fainted when the magician uttered such fearful words respecting his (Mole's) fate.

Harry Girdwood, however, handed him a rum flask, and a good pull at that restored his nerves.

"Pooh!" said he, "I don't believe a word he uttered."

"Still sceptical?" said the magician. "But to convince you of my power, I will show you anything you like in my magic mirror."

"Very well, then, I should like to see Harkaway and Harvey at this present moment—just to ascertain what they are doing—that will be a test."

He chuckled as he said this.

But as he spoke, the magic mirror grew light, and two figures were seen, set, as it were, in a frame.

Jack Harkaway, the elder, was seated in an arm-chair reading; beside him stood his constant companion, Dick Harvey.

The latter's figure was the more remarkable of the two, and the attitude was not merely characteristic, but it was startlingly like life. One hand was in his pocket; the other was at his face, the thumb pointing at his nose, the fingers outstretched towards the audience.

"What do you think of that?" asked Harry Girdwood, in low and awe-inspiring tones.

"Marvelous!" cried Mole; "that is Harkaway and Harvey, sure enough. Harvey has got something the matter with his nose."

"No," whispered Harry, "he's taking a sight at you."

"So he is. Just like Harvey. Harvey!" he called out.

The mirror darkened, and the figures faded away from the sight upon the instant.

"Do you desire still another proof of my skill?" asked the wizard.

"Well, you can, if you like, tell me something more about myself; but don't put yourself to any trouble."

The wizard leaned over his book earnestly for a considerable time.

"I see here," said he, "that you have contrived to keep one important matter secret from your friends."

"What?"

"The hairs of your head are numbered," continued the wizard.

Mr. Mole changed color.

"How—what?"

"By the barber; you wear a wig."

"Oh, no—no!" exclaimed Harry Girdwood, positively. "You are wrong there, sir, I assure you. Is he not, Mr. Mole?"

"Of course he is."

"Will you see for yourself, unbelieving boy?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Where—say where shall my familiar take it?"

Mr. Mole groaned.

At the self-same instant out went the lights; a heavy hand was placed upon Mr. Mole's head, and hey, presto! his wig was seen dancing about at the ceiling, glittering with a phosphorescent light upon it.

Mr. Mole looked up, gave one awful yell, then made for the door, and flew away as fast as his wooden legs would carry him.

And his yells continued, for all along his route young Jack had sprinkled a plentiful supply of crackers, which exploded as he ran.

An unearthly chorus, sounding like the discordant laughter of invisible fiends, greeted his retreat, and he never stopped until he had got home, panting and gasping for breath.

As soon as he was out of the room, Harry Girdwood locked the door.

"Come forth, my merry devils!" he shouted. "Old Mole's gone."

The curtain was drawn back, and in came Dick Harvey and Jack Harkaway carrying lights.

The wizard threw back his head-dress and long horsehair wig, and showed the grinning face of young Jack himself.

"Bravo, Jack," said his comrade, Harry, "you did ever so much better than the other conjuror did."

"Was he frightened?"

"Poor old Mole! I never saw him so alarmed before."

Harvey and old Jack enjoyed the fun every bit as much as the boys.

"My opinion is," said the elder Harkaway, laughing, "that the triumph of the whole job was in the dancing wig."

"It was beautifully done," said Harvey.

"I nearly missed it," said Harry Girdwood, laughing, "for you put out the lights so suddenly that I couldn't find the string, and then I nearly dug the hook into his head as well as his wig; and as for the phosphorus, I gave him a dab with it on the nose."

"Ha-ha-ha!"

Everything had been carefully arranged beforehand, it need hardly be said, and a cord, with a fish-hook at the end of it, was run through a small wheel fixed in the ceiling.

Harry held the other end of the cord, and as soon as the darkness and confusion came, he drove the hook in poor old Mole's wig, while he rubbed it dexterously with phosphorus, and then with a jerk he hauled it up to the ceiling, where he set it dancing about, to the indescribable horror of Mole.

## CHAPTER V.

WHEREIN MR. MOLE IS CRUELLY USED—THE GARDEN FETE—SUNDAY AND MONDAY GIVE AN ENTERTAINMENT—ANOTHER LOOK INTO THE MAGIC MIRROR—STUDIES OF NATURAL HISTORY—AN INVOLUNTARY PERFORMER.

WHEN Isaac Mole had time to reflect coolly upon what had occurred, doubts arose in his mind.

In spite of the seemingly inexplicable nature of the phenonema which he had witnessed, he felt that Harkaway, father or son, must know something of it.

Dick Harvey, he was morally certain, was in it.

If anything fell, Harkaway would start up, on which Harvey or young Jack would inquire anxiously if he were startled, solely for the purpose of leading up to Mole's words at the wizard's house.

"Startled—nervous! Never; iron nerves, sir—adamant!"

Upon these occasions, Mr. Mole would glide away from Harkaway's room without a word, leaving his tormentors to have their grin out all to themselves.

All they could do they could not make him drop a word of allusion to the events just narrated.

On that topic he was utterly dumb.

Day and night the worthy Isaac Mole brooded over one solitary topic.

Revenge!

"I'll teach 'em," he said; "I'll let them know what it is to play practical jokes with a man like me."

The last straw breaks the camel's back.

The last indignity on his wig proved too much for Isaac Mole, for he had, until that fatal day at the magician's, been fondly bugging himself in the delusion that the secret was all his own.

The talk was tortured and twisted about so as to make it bear upon the sorest subject for the poor old gentleman.

"Dash my wig, Mr. Mole!" Harvey would say; "let's take a short country excursion. You know the advantages of change of hair."

If a suggestion were wanting for the dinner of the day, a voice was ready to advocate "jugged hare."



"That's very well," said Harkaway, "but where can you get one in these parts?" "That's it," chimed in Harvey; "as Mrs. Glaspe says, 'first catch your hair,' eh, Mr. Mole?"

Mole winced.

"It's not always easy to catch it, is it, Mr. Mole?" said Harry Girdwood, slyly.

"Not if it flies too high," said young Jack.

This chaff goaded poor old Mole to fury, coming as it did from the boys.

"Really," he said, with a lofty sneer, "I don't see what you have to laugh at in the idle nonsense of these children."

This made them grin more than ever.

"The wit of the rising generation," sneered Mole.

"Mr. Mole would like the young generation never to rise, I think," said Harry Girdwood.

"That's it," laughed Harkaway: "Mr. Mole was always so conservative in his ideas."

"Let me see, dad," said young Jack, looking puzzled; "conservative, why, that means a tory."

"Yes."

"But, Mr. Mole, I thought that you were a whig."

Such a storm of laughter greeted this sally, that Mr. Mole could not stand up against it.

Looking daggers at everybody, he trudged out of the room, digging his walking stick fiercely as he went.

Now at the door, who should he meet but Sunday, grinning from ear to ear?

"I'm not going to be fooled by you, you infernal black pudding," cried Mole, exasperated beyond measure.

"Yah—yah," grinned the mirthful Cæsar Augustus, holding his sides.

"Take that," cried Mole.

Sunday did take it.

It was not a pleasant dose, for "that" in this instance, meant a severe crack across the head with old Mole's walking stick.

Sunday rubbed his poll.

Happily the thick wool with which it was garnished saved the skull from much danger, and a nigger's head is proverbially tough.

But yet Sunday did not relish the indignity.

"You dam wooden-legged tief," he shouted out; "I'll gib it to yar for dis hyar!"

And so, full of revengeful thoughts, the darkey sought his friend Monday.

And they set to work plotting, with what result the next day showed—much to the old gentleman's disgust.

\* \* \* \* \*

They mustered a good round dinner party upon the following day.

In front of the summer house was an object which excited Mr. Mole's curiosity considerably.

One of the ladies asked what it was there for.

"I don't know exactly what it is," replied Harkaway; "something of Monday's, I think, Dick."

"I believe so," replied Harvey, carelessly.

"They are going to give us an entertainment of some kind," said young Jack.

The cloth having been cleared, Monday came forward, and bowing gravely, addressed the company:

"Ladies and gentlemen—"

"Hear—hear!" from Mole, who, thinking himself free from attack, determined to try a bit of chaff upon his own account.

"Thank you, sar," said Monday, bowing gracefully to Mole.

"Ladies and gentlemen—"

"Bravo—bravo!" shouted Mole; "exceedingly bravo."

"Folks generally—sane and insane—" here he bowed in a very marked manner at Mr. Mole.

"Hear—hear!" cried Dick.

"My entertainment is just a-gwine to begin, and as it is of a scientific nature dat asks for all your attention, I must ax them to go at once who don't wish to stay and see it all through, so as not to interrupt me."

No one wished to go.

The most eager person to remain was Mr. Mole. Poor old Mole.

Monday went on:

"The first that I se gwine to show you, ladies and gentlemen, is some speciminks of what is known as the occult art, that is, the black art, or magic."

Mole winced.

"Go on."

"Hear—hear!" said Dick.

"Bravo, Monday," from Jack Harkaway.

Mole was silent.

He had not another "bravo" in him, so to speak.

Monday bowed in acknowledgement of the plaudits.

"In the first place, den, ladies and gentlemen," he went on to say, "I mean to show you my magic mirror."

Mole glanced nervously at Dick, and from him to Jack Harkaway.

But both looked as stolid as Dutchmen.

Monday drew back the curtain from the easel, disclosing a frame, on which was fitted a plain black board.

"In this frame," said the professor of the black art, "I can show you any persons you may ask for, dat is, persons who are known to you."

Mr. Mole had heard enough to convince him that he was in danger of being once more sacrificed to the insatiable passion of his two old pupils, for chaffing and practical joking.

"Well, sar," said Monday, "just you try um."

"We will," said Dick.

"Well, then, sar, who shall be the first person I must bring before you?"

No reply.

"Well, Mr. Mole, name somebody," said Monday, in his most insinuating manner.

Mole's only reply was a dissenting growl.

"No."

"Will you, Mr. Harkaway, sar?" he said.

"Well, I will if you like—suppose that we call upon your friend, Sunday?"

"Very good, sar."

And then he set to work.

A walking stick served him as a wand, and this he waved three times slowly and majestically, while he repeated in solemn tones this singular legend:

"Hokus-pokus popalorum,  
Stickstun—stickstun cockalorum jig!"

Thereupon the curtain went back, and lo! Sunday appeared sitting upon a throne of state, robed in a long crimson mantle, which made him look like an emperor.

It was a most dignified tableau, or it would have been but for the long clay pipe the darkey held in his mouth and the pewter pot he carried in his hand.

"Ladies and gemmen," said Monday, "dat is our ole friend, dressed as de Empyroar Charleymane."

"Bravo—bravo!"

Even Mr. Mole laughed.

The curtain closed over this dignified and historical representation.

"Now," said Dick Harvey, "let us see some of our live stock."

"Yes—yes," said young Jack; "show us Nero."

"And Mike."

Monday bowed.

Then back went the curtain, and there sat Nero, the monkey, on the throne just vacated by the Emperor "Charlemagne," and at his feet stood the bold poodle, Mike, wagging his tail.

Nero appeared to understand what was required of him, and he sat motionless as a statue for awhile, but before long the peculiar, nervous irritation to which monkeys appear to be subject, attacked him, and he began a series of spasmodic researches in natural history all over his ribs.

"Nero's making up for lost time," said young Jack; "look how he's getting to work."

Nero was indeed scratching away furiously.

"There's diligence," laughed young Jack: "now he's busy."

And then he broke out into the following appropriate march:

"He'll catch the flee—he'll catch the flee—  
He'll catch the fleeting hour."

Down went the curtain.

There was a general laugh at this.

"When we asked you to show us the live stock," said Dick Harvey, "you took us too literally, Monday."

"Yah—yah!"

"You must learn to draw the line somewhere."

Monday here rapped on the ground with his wand to secure attention.

Silence having been gained, he addressed them thus:

"Before we leave dis part of de entertainment," he said, "I conclude de exhibition of one more animal. For reasons dat I need not mention, I shall leave you to guess at de name of dis animal. It is a small animal dat lives on wums."

"Wums?"

"Yes."

"What are they?"

"On wums, scriggley wums and insects, and burrows in the earth."

"Why, dear me," said young Jack, innocently, "that must be a mole."

Before a word could be said, back went the curtain, and Nero was discovered walking upon a pair of wooden stilts.

He staggered about like a man in liquor, and made everyone yell again at the quaint manner in which he had hit off Mr. Mole's movements.

"Whatever has he got on his head?" said someone.

Mole shivered.

He guessed.

Guessed; alas, he was but too sure.

Nero put all doubts at rest by making a graceful bow and removing his wig instead of a hat.

The wig!

Yea; the identical wig which Mr. Mole had left behind him in his precipitate flight from the conjurers.

This was too much.

Losing his dignity completely, Mr. Mole jumped up and burst through the group of spectators, dashing out of the place in a perfect fury, young Jack's voice ringing in his ears as he shouted:

"A wig—a wig! My kingdom for a wig!"

## CHAPTER VI.

THE BRIGAND'S CAMP—A MOUNTAIN BIVOUAC—AN ALARM—THE SOLDIERS—A CHALLENGE—THE BRIGAND'S WIDOW—FATAL NEWS.

WE change the scene.

And now we find ourselves in a mountain pass, where rough-looking men are grouped about a camp fire.

A short distance from this group stands a tall man, leaning moodily upon the muzzle of his musket, while he watches the zig-zag paths up the mountain side.

Upon this man one can see the whole safety of the party depends.

He is the sentry.

A prolonged silence was suddenly broken by the sentinel looking up, and grasping his musket nervously, while he turned a warning gesture to the camp.

"What is it?" exclaimed one of the party, jumping up.

"Hush!"

The sentry turned with his fingers on his lips, and motioned him to silence.

At a sign from one of the men—evidently a superior—the whole party sprang to their feet.

A hurried examination of their musket-locks and arms generally showed that they expected danger, and only waited a word from the sentinel to be "up and doing."

The leader stepped up to the sentry, drawn sword in hand.

"What is it?"

"The patrol"

"Soldiers?"

The sentry nodded.

"The Carbonari?"

"Yes."

The leader grasped his sword nervously, and made a step forward as though he would have dashed through the ravine and charged the military alone and unaided.

But if such were his intentions, he speedily altered his mind.

"Perish them!" he muttered; "and curse their spying!"

"We could pick them all off from here," said one of the men—a huge, burly fellow, who had climbed up to a projecting rock commanding an extensive view. "All down to the last man."

And as he spoke, he brought his gun up to his shoulder with an ominous gesture.

"Hold, Toro!" ejaculated an English voice. "Your hasty imprudence will spoil us."

"Bah!" said Toro, replying in the same tongue. "You are over prudent, Hunston. Why should we not destroy them while they are in our power?"

"What if one escape?"

"One should not," retorted the Italian, savagely; "no, not half a one."

"And where is the good if we succeeded as you say?"

"Good!" reiterated Toro, passionately; "are they not our sworn foes? Are they not here in pursuit of us? Good—why, will it not lessen the number of our enemies by their number at least?"

"Yes, perhaps," replied Hunston. "And if



successful, it would so thoroughly alarm the country, that it would cause a whole army to be sent after us, and make the end a mere question of time. Let one escape to tell the tale, and it would bring them down to this spot, our safest place in the mountains, and hitherto undiscovered by our enemies."

Toro grumbled.

Yet there was so much truth in what Hunston said that he could urge nothing further in favor of violent measures.

The sentry, who was still on the watch at the fissure in the rocks, here turned around and motioned them to silence.

"Not so loud!" he exclaimed, in a whisper; "they can hear something—they are looking our way."

"Hah!"

In fact, the military were so near, that they could be heard plainly enough giving their words of command.

"Halt! Ground arms!"

The rattle of their arms could be heard distinctly.

The officer then could be seen taking observations through a short telescope which he carried suspended by a strap to his side.

He glanced about the place and fixed for some little time upon the fissures and rocky passes, resting longer below the very one at which the sentry was posted than elsewhere.

But although it would seem to have aroused his suspicions, it was evident that he could see nothing, for, after a few minutes, he lowered his glass and shut it up.

The reason of this was, that where the sentry stood was completely shadowed by the overhanging rocks, so that he was invisible to them, although they could be distinctly seen by the sentry.

The scrutiny seemed to satisfy the officer.

"Shoulder arms! Left wheel! March!" he cried.

The measured tramp of the soldiers was distinctly heard.

Fainter and fainter it grew, until it died away.

The sentry watched them in silence several minutes before he spoke.

Presently he turned around to his comrades and nodded.

"Safe," he said. "They have turned by the cross roads; the last man is out of sight."

"That's prime," said our old friend Tomaso.

"Then now to dinner."

The sentry was not lost sight of—indeed, he was not the man to allow himself to be forgotten, for before the meal had been long in progress, he reminded them that he had such a thing as an appetite about him, by a very rough address.

"Gluttons!" he said to the party generally, "do you think only of yourselves? Am I to mount guard forever?"

They only laughed at this.

"Right, Ymeniz," said Toro; "turn and turn about is but fair. Maffeo."

"Present," returned one of the men, jumping up and saluting with a stiff military action, which told that he had once served in the army.

"Relieve guard, and let Ymeniz take your place here."

Maffeo picked up his musket, and marched up to the rocky pass, while the late sentry joined the feast.

Now while the guard was changed, without any particular demonstration of reluctance upon the part of the new sentry himself, Tomaso made a wry face.

"Our comrade Toro gives his commands as naturally as though he were our leader."

Toro flushed up at this.

"And why not?" he said, almost fiercely.

"Why not?" echoed Tomaso, with a sneer.

"Oh, I could give several reasons."

"Give them."

"Nay, one will suffice."

"Well?"

"Our only chieftain is the gallant Mathias."

"And he is in prison."

"True; but that doesn't prove you to be our leader while poor Mathias is in the hands of the Philistines."

"Bah!" said Toro, impatiently. "Someone must command while Mathias is away."

"Then there are others who should command here in his absence in preference to those who are new-comers."

"Who are they?"

"You haven't far to look," returned Tomaso, drawing himself up haughtily; "myself, for instance."

Toro burst into a loud, derisive laugh.

"You!" he said, contemptuously.

"Yes, I."

"Why, I have led a band of gallant fellows years ago—a band of thrice our strength; ay, and what is more, I have led them to victory again and again—to victory and fortune."

"Your lucky star has not been in the ascendant since you have deigned to honor us with your company," said Tomaso.

The covert sneer conveyed in this speech made the peppery Italian fire up.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded fiercely.

"I mean that your gallant followers must have missed so distinguished a leader; pity you could not return to lead them to fresh triumphs, greatly as we should deplore your loss."

Toro boiled over at this.

"Do you want to fix a quarrel on me?" he said, in a voice of suppressed passion.

"No," responded Tomaso, insolently. "When I want to quarrel, I go straight to my point—I don't beat about the bush. I only want to remind you of your proper place here; so fall back, Signor Italiano, and learn to be more respectful in your bearing."

Stung to the quick by this, Toro plucked out his sword, and would have rushed upon the other, had not several of the men interposed.

"Come—come," they said, "none of that. We have plenty of enemies; we can cut their throats, not our own, when we want to spill blood."

"Besides," said an old man, "it is profitless quarreling about the leadership—we have a leader. Poor Mathias!"

"Right!" echoed several voices together, "right! Sit down—no quarreling."

"Here," exclaimed an old brigand, "let us drink to Mathias."

"And his speedy return," added another.

"Ay—ay, his speedy release."

Horn goblets were handed around, and filled with ruddy wine from a skin which the old brigand himself produced from his own mysterious larder.

"To Mathias!"

"To Mathias!"

A ringing cheer was heard, and the goblets were drained to the very dregs.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Who goes there?"

"A friend."

"The word."

"Mathias."

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

This challenge was replied to, and a woman appeared at the narrow entrance to the mountain pass.

Slowly she walked through, her head drooping, and her eyes fixed upon the ground.

They recognized her now.

It was the wife of their chieftain, the bold Mathias.

"I scarcely knew you," said the sentry, apologetically.

She looked up and smiled in a strangely vacant manner.

The other said nothing.

Her manner impressed them with ugly feelings.

Instinctively they felt that some fresh calamity had happened to them.

In fear and trembling they anticipated the evil tidings which she had brought, although, of course, they could not guess at its exact nature.

"Did you succeed?" demanded the old man.

She nodded gravely.

"You saw Mathias?"

"Yes."

Her answer was given in the same vacant manner, and staring fixedly into the very midst of them, she appeared to see nothing.

"Did you tell our brave captain how eagerly we look forward to his release—how anxiously we long for the moment when he shall be again here amongst us—at our head?"

It was the old brigand who spoke.

She gave him a strange look, from which they could gather absolutely nothing, and her eyes dropped again to the ground.

The heavy, unpleasant feeling deepened.

Scarcely one of them had the courage to address her again.

An oppressive silence fell upon them all.

They looked at each other in silent, awkward expectation, all bold desperadoes as they were, cowed into silence by her manner.

"You succeeded in seeing him?" said Hunston.

"Yes," she said, quietly.

"And you bade him be of good heart—you told him that we were making a plan in his behalf—a plan which could not fail of success?"

You said—"

The woman looked up.

"Nothing."

"What?"

"Nothing," she slowly repeated, "nothing. I saw him, but it was too late to speak these words of comfort."

"Too late?" iterated Hunston, eagerly, "too late?"

"Ay, too late for words of comfort, for menaces, or for anything!"

"Surely you do not mean—"

He could not complete the sentence, but she helped him out:

"I do," she said, in a hollow voice, and nodding her head gravely, "I do mean that; he, Mathias, the brigand chief, is dead!"

The brigands, one and all, leaped to their feet, snatching up their carbines, while from their throats issued a deep cry of revenge.

Dead! The word thrilled them one and all with horror.

The bold Mathias dead!

Prepared as they had been by her manner for some dire calamity, it came upon them like a thunderclap.

The awfully calm manner of the chieftain's widow impressed them more than if she had thrown up her hands in wild despair and given way to the noisiest demonstrations of woe.

After some few minutes, one ventured to break the awesome silence.

"How did he die?"

The brigand's wife turned from her questioner with a shudder.

"Ask me nothing yet. I am not able to speak of that at present; give me time to conquer this weakness?"

"If I ask, it is that I may seek vengeance upon his destroyer," said Tomaso, the speaker.

Her eyes sparkled, and the color rushed into her pale cheek at the word.

"Vengeance—ay, vengeance! Well spoken, my bold Tomaso; vengeance is something to live for after all; vengeance we'll have, too. We'll glut ourselves with it; a feast of vengeance we'll have."

"We will—we will!" shouted the brigands, as though with one single voice.

"These English and these Americans shall die!"

"They shall!"

"We'll exterminate them, root and branch."

"Ay—ay."

"Firstly, these Harkaways shall fall, then—"

"They die!"

"Does Mathias owe his death to Harkaway's band?" demanded Hunston.

"Was not this Harkaway the prime mover in all our disasters?"

"Curse him!"

"Ay, curse him!"

Toro here stepped forward in the center of the circle which the brigands had formed.

"If Harkaway is to be dealt with," he said, "I'll undertake to lead you to triumph within three days."

Cheers greeted this speech, until Tomaso stepped forward.

"If we want a leader," said he, "we can elect one; we are not in need of any man to elect himself."

"Stand back," said Toro, angrily.

"Fall back yourself," retorted Tomaso, "and obey your superior."

"My superior? Ha—ha! He does not live here," ejaculated Toro, fiercely.

The old brigand here once more stepped between the disputants, and interfered.

"Why quarrel over a dead man's shoes, while his widow is still in sight?"

Tomaso fell back at the rebuke, but Toro, less thin-skinned, stuck boldly to his text.

"If I offer to lead you against the enemy," he said, "it is solely for our interest generally, not for mine alone."

"Oho!"

"Ay, and I can prove it."

"Do so."

"I will."

"Hear him," said Tomaso, derisively; "hear our general benefactor speak up for us all."

Toro turned upon the speaker savagely.

"I can speak to you presently," he said, significantly tapping his sword hilt.

"You'll find me ready to answer you in any way," retorted Tomaso boldly, also tapping his sword.

"I doubt not; meanwhile, I offer myself as the leader, for several reasons; firstly, I know these Harkaways well, and am more fit to cope with them than those who have never met them."

Tomaso laughed.



"I doubt that," he said; "why, by your own showing, you have never gained any signal successes with them."

"No, but I start where you would have to begin; I am armed by experience which you lack."

"True—true," exclaimed several of the brigands.

"That sounds fairly enough," replied Tomaso, "but you have met with such signal discomfiture, that I, for one, should have small confidence in your leadership. I don't speak to uphold myself; let any other leader be chosen—let one of ourselves, to wit, not an Italian, or any other foreigner. Why should not a Greek lead Greeks?"

"Hurrah!"

A general cheer greeted this speech.

"Tomaso—Tomaso!" they cried; "Tomaso for leader!"

Toro's face flushed blood red.

"Hearken to me," he exclaimed, in a voice now hoarse with passion; "Mathias was a great leader, and I felt it no shame to serve under him, but I have been in command of as bold and brave a band as this, one far stronger in point of numbers, and if I am not elected for the command, I shall withdraw altogether. Have me or not, you have the choice; only this is my determination; I will accept orders from no man here."

"Go, then," said Tomaso; "leave us. You came unbidden, and you may depart when you please."

A general silence succeeded this speech.

Toro's aid was not to be despised.

His huge body and his muscular arm had gained him the consideration of most of those lawless men, who literally revered brute strength.

"Wait—wait," said a brigand, stepping forward. "Let us not be too hasty. Some are for Toro, some are for Tomaso."

"Well?"

"Say on."

"Let us put it to the vote, and let each of the disputants pledge himself to abide by the decision."

"Good."

"What says Toro?"

"Agreed."

"And so am I," returned Tomaso, promptly.

"Hands up, then, for Toro."

Half the hands were uplifted and counted over.

"Now for Tomaso."

Up went the hands of the other side, and when they came to tell them off, it was discovered that the brigands were equally divided in their choice.

"We cannot have two leaders," said the brigand Ymeniz.

"No—no."

"Then we must have neither, as the matter stands."

"Unless one gives way."

"Or," ejaculated the Italian, fiercely, "unless Tomaso likes to decide by the sword which of us shall have the lead."

"I'm agreed to that," retorted Tomaso, promptly. "Let us fight for it, and may the best man win."

"Agreed."

"Hurrah—hurrah!"

A ring was formed, and preparations were made for a deadly encounter.

As they were not agreed about the choice of weapons, a coin was thrown up, and Toro won.

Tomaso would have chosen pistols, for he was an excellent shot, and it gave him the superiority; whereas, although not altogether unskilled in fencing, Toro's superior weight and size gave him a great advantage with the sword.

However, there was nothing for it now but to fight.

The combatants stripped to the waist, and each received his weapon from his second.

They were long, heavy swords, cut and thrust, like the heavy cavalry carry, and with such tools as these, there could be but one result!

Death!

There were no half measures with these weapons.

"Now, then," exclaimed the Italian, impatiently, "why this dallying? On guard!"

"I am ready," cried Tomaso, gripping his sword firmly.

The swords met with a clash which sent forth a shower of sparks, and both men recoiled with the force of the shock.

Recovering themselves quickly, however, they went to work in real savage style, and chopped away at each other with vicious earnestness.

Now Tomaso, it was clear, could not hold his own in a battle wherein mere brute force was to have the best of it, and feeling himself at a dis-

advantage in this respect, he dodged about his adversary as nimbly as a Harlequin himself.

Being very quick-sighted, he saw what sort of a blow was coming ere it was fairly dealt, and so he shaped his defense.

If it was a desperate stroke, he jumped out of its reach.

If a light one, he turned it off upon the edge of his own weapon.

In this way he worked upon Toro to such an extent that the Italian's temper got the mastery of him.

Tomaso was attacking him so closely that the Italian looked like losing the battle.

Toro was bleeding from a dozen small flesh wounds.

Tomaso was, up to this moment, almost unscathed.

Presently he grew over bold, and incautiously trusting himself within reach, Toro lunged so sharply out that it was only by the merest shave he escaped being spitted on the Italian's long sword like a lark on a skewer.

As it was, the sword pierced the waist band of his nether garments.

Tomaso stumbled and so nearly lost his balance that it took him all his time to parry the next stroke, which was put in with equal smartness and vigor.

One blow that might have brought down an elephant, sent Tomaso on to his knees.

The same stroke made a notch in the Greek's weapon half an inch deep.

Had he caught the blow upon the flat of his sword, it would have been shivered to atoms beyond all doubt.

Toro saw his chance.

Nor was he slow to avail himself of it.

Quick as thought, another blow fell, and out of his grasp flew the Greek's blade.

He lay prostrate at the mercy of his adversary.

"Beg your life," cried Toro, planting his heavy foot firmly upon his adversary's chest.

"Never."

"Then die!"

He raised his sword.

But he paused.

Was it the action of a brave man to take the life of a defenseless foe?

Well, it was not the thought of such romantic notions which troubled Toro; it was simply because there were spectators.

These spectators, he knew, would judge it harshly.

He thirsted for Tomaso's blood.

Yet he dare not indulge in his brutal passion.

Therefore, making a virtue of the necessity, he lowered his sword, and spurning his beaten adversary with his foot, bade him rise.

"Then take your life unasked," he said, coarsely, "and in future, learn to know and to respect your superiors."

Toro's speech was received with cheers by the brigands.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW CAPTAIN—HUNSTON'S TROUBLE—THE ARM AND ITS LEGEND—HOW EMMERSON'S VENGEANCE WORKS STEALTHILY ON.

"WHAT do you say, men, now?" demanded the huge Italian, as he wiped his sword.

"Huzza for Toro!" yelled twenty hoarse voices.

"Have I fairly earned my right to take the lead here?"

"Yes—yes!"

"I want you to be unanimous," he persisted.

"We are."

Toro fixed his eyes upon one or two of the disappointed supporters of Tomaso, who had not uttered a word since the discomfiture of their champion, and said to them especially—

"If any of you object to me as a leader, let them come forward now and speak up."

There were one or two murmuring voices.

"Look," cried the giant Toro, "men all, if any here still denies my power, let them step forward, and this sword shall prove my right."

This was final.

After the manner in which Toro had just dealt with their friend Tomaso, they were not encouraged to provoke a quarrel.

And so, by his daring audacity and brute strength, Toro the Italian raised himself to the leadership of the Greek brigands.

None dare to dispute his sway from that moment.

Some had a difficulty to swallow the bitter pill, but the alternative was so very unpleasant that they got over it.

\* \* \* \* \*

And Harkaway's enemy, Hunston?

Why has he fallen so into the background of late?

His sole thoughts have been engrossed by the fearful sufferings to which he is subject.

That dreadful arm—the legacy of vengeance of the murdered Emerson.

Where the evil was it baffled all his skill to discover.

Slowly, yet surely, this horrible piece of mechanism was eating away its wearer's life.

"It seems almost as though some subtle poison were slowly injected into my body through this arm," thought Hunston, "and yet I cannot work without it."

Never was vengeance more terrible than that of the dead Robert Emerson.

The wonder was that Hunston lived through it.

His constitution must have been of iron.

The arm was removed, but only with infinite trouble and suffering; and then after some considerable time, Hunston began to experience a faint sense of relief.

The sufferings slowly diminished.

This convinced Hunston that he had been correct in supposing that the poison was concealed in the mechanical arm.

He laid bare as much of it as he could without permanently damaging it, and pored over it for hours at a stretch.

To what good?

None.

Now this limb was the work of no common artificer.

It was the work of a hand of rare cunning.

A master spirit had invented it, and its mystery was far too deep to be penetrated by a common bungler.

Hunston was at last so tortured that, disguising himself, he one day left the mountains, and sought the advice of a surgeon.

"The man who planned this arm," said the surgeon to whom Hunston submitted it for examination, "must have devoted a lifetime to the manufacture and perfecting of this mechanical limb."

Hunston smiled.

He knew too well how little time the wretched man Emerson gave to anything like industrial pursuits.

"What is this?" asked this same surgeon, pointing to the flat of the arm where the engraved legend was almost obscured with a dark stain.

Hunston changed color and fidgeted about.

"I don't know."

"There is something written."

"Yes—yes, so I believe, but it is obscured by that stain—"

He peered closer into the arm yet, and looked serious, as turning to Hunston, he said:

"Why, it's a blood-stain."

"No—no!" returned Hunston, hurriedly, "impossible. It cannot be!"

"Impossible or not," said the surgeon, "bleed it is, and nothing but blood. Yet I see that, in spite of this stain, the reading is clear enough."

"Scarcely," said Hunston.

"It is, though, and it is in English, I should say, too."

"Yes."

"Can't you read it?"

"No."

"Strange. Yet you are English."

"Yes."

"Well, I have some English friends here to whom I will show it, and—"

Hunston broke in impatiently at this.

"English here!" he exclaimed. "Where do they live?"

"At the villa—"

"What, the Harkaway family, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"And you would take it there?"

"Why not? Mr. Harkaway is a clever man. He is surrounded also by clever people; there is a curious old gentleman there, too, an old gentleman of great learning, and he might be enabled to throw some light upon the secret, which even the closest scrutiny cannot penetrate."

Hunston listened to the end, but not without having to exercise a certain amount of self-control.

"How is this old gentleman called—~~was~~ clever, learned old gentleman?"

"You seem to say that with a sneer, sir," said the surgeon; "but you may rely upon it he is a very great *savant*—a man of great accomplishments—a warrior who has—"

"Who has lost two legs?"

"Yes; you know him?"

"Slightly; his name is Mole."

"It is."

"And you would take my arm to these people for them to stare and gape at? No, sir; I am foolish enough to seek to conceal my affliction



from the world, and by the aid of this wonderful arm I have been hitherto successful."

The doctor bowed.

"So I beg you will keep my secret."

"Rely upon it."

Hunston showed all his old cunning in this speech.

Yet all his inquiries, all his researches availed him nothing.

The work of the dead Robert Emmerson remained as before, an inscrutable mystery.

It remained the silent executor of its creator's vengeance.

Slowly, yet surely, fulfilling the blood-stained legend on the steel arm.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HUNSTON AGAIN AT WORK—THE DANCING GARDEN—MARIETTA AND HER GOSSIP—GREAT NEWS—THE ARREST—WHAT CHARGE?—MURDER.

HUNSTON'S infirmity had told in many ways.

He had sunk to be a mere nonentity in the band.

Now he was but too pleased to be left at peace when in his great suffering: yet no sooner did he recover health and spirits a little than his old interest revived, and with his interest, all the old jealousies.

He bitterly resented Toro's assumption of the command.

"Let the blustering bully fool impose upon them if he will," he said to himself, again and again; "he never could take me in. It shall be my task to show them who can render the most real service to the band."

Their programme suited Hunston well.

What could better have accorded with his humor than the devotion of all their time, thought and energies to the persecution—perhaps to the entire destruction—of the Harkaway family?

It was all gone on with, avowedly to avenge the death of Mathias.

Little cared Hunston about the dead brigand chief.

Indeed, but for the presence of his widow in their midst, and the occasional mention of his name, Hunston would, in all probability, have forgotten that he had ever existed.

As it was, he made it his especial task to hang about the parts of the town where the Harkaways were most likely to be met.

And never did he appear twice in the same dress.

One evening, strolling into a dancing garden, he chanced to come upon a smart young lady whose appearance attracted his attention at once.

"I know her well," he said to himself, "though where I have seen her is a puzzle to me for the moment."

The merry antics of one of the dancers caused her to laugh, and then he recognised the sound of her voice immediately.

"Marietta!"

Surely he should not so soon have forgotten her.

Was it not upon the occasion of her memorable exploits at the gardens of the Contessa Maraviglia that he had last seen her—that night when poor Magog Brand met his fate?

As soon as he recognized her, he made up his mind to accost her.

So, first (to assure himself of the excellence of his disguise) catching a cursory glance of his shadow in a mirror, he crossed the garden, and stepping up to her side, he addressed her.

"Do you not join the dance, signorina?" he said.

The waiting maid, in reply, only cocked her chin haughtily and moved away.

"You are proud, Marietta, to-night," said Hunston.

She turned upon hearing her name mentioned.

"I do not know you, sir."

"But you see I know you, Marietta, and what is more, if you were to ask your master, Mr. Harkaway, or Mrs. Harkaway, about their friend Saville, I dare say they would not say anything very bad about him."

Marietta courtesied in some confusion.

"I don't remember seeing you at the villa, signor," she said, "so pray excuse me."

"No excuses, pretty Marietta; I am not a very constant visitor, yet I have seen you, and yours is a face—once seen not easily forgotten."

Marietta, like a true daughter of Eve, did not object to this sort of thing.

And so she fell into the trap which he set for her with so little pains.

That is, she grew gossip and communicative.

"And does Master Jack come here sometimes?" asked the sham Mr. Saville.

She shook her head.

"Never."

"Mama would object, of course," he said, lightly; "this is such a wicked place for her good, mild, innocent boy to come to."

Marietta laughed a good deal at hearing young Jack spoken of thus.

"Neither of the young gentlemen are too innocent," she said; "but yet they don't come here."

"Possibly they have no taste for this sort of thing," suggested Hunston.

Marietta shrugged her shoulders.

"They are forbidden to go about alone."

"Why?"

"I don't know—some fancy of the ladies. They think that the brigands are always lurking about, ready to drop upon their boys."

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed Hunston. "A very good joke."

"Is it not? Although I must tell you that there is some reason for fear, for I have twice come across the—"

"Across who?"

"The brigands."

"Impossible."

"It is true."

"The miscreants. Did they steal anything?"

"Well, only a few—a few kisses."

"Hum!" said Hunston, "that was excusable. It is a sort of pilfering which I would willingly indulge in myself."

"I dare say," answered Marietta, saucily, "but I have discovered how to use my weapons in self-defense."

"What weapons?"

"These."

She held up her ten pretty little claws. A tiny hand they were mounted on, too.

Hunston surveyed them with the eye of a connoisseur, and looked the admiration he wished to convey quite extravagantly enough for a vain woman to understand his meaning.

"Exquisite," he said. "It would be flattery even to be scratched by such models."

She laughed.

He resumed.

"And so they never go forth for fear of the brigands?"

"Never."

"Their lives must be wretched, so confined to the house."

"Ay, but they go out to sea."

"To sea?"

"Yes, in their sailing boat; the two boys are always out fishing, sailing, and what not."

Hunston pricked up his ears at these tidings.

"Yes, on the water they are allowed full liberty, for brigands and cats, according to Signor Harvey, are the two animals that fear the water most."

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed Hunston, "very good indeed, but I never knew that brigands so feared the water."

"So Signor Harvey says," replied Marietta. "Indeed he says that a bar of soap and a bowl of water would frighten a brigand more than a whole armory of firearms."

This was true.

Brigands may look picturesque when seen from a distance.

At close quarters they are, to put it mildly, objectionable.

If they do not hold soap and water in absolute fear, as Dick Harvey said, they at least look upon them as vanities and effeminacies unworthy of desperadoes.

\* \* \* \* \*

"So—so," muttered Hunston, as he walked away. "I shall secure them yet. For through the boys I can get at the father, and at Harvey. Hah!"

At this precise moment a heavy hand was placed upon his shoulder.

There was a professional touch in it, which once felt could never be forgotten.

Hunston had felt such a clutch once in England, and the recollection was likely to last him as long as he lived.

He forgot where he was, everything, and instinctively he faltered this inquiry:

"On what charge?"

"Murder!"

He knew the voice.

He had no need to look around; the voice was not one easily forgotten.

It was our old friend Pike, the English detective.

"Yes, Hunston," replied the officer, coolly. "You have been giving me a lot of trouble, but it

was only a question of time and patience, I knew. Come along; you are my prisoner."

## CHAPTER IX.

A GREAT DANGER—OFF AND AWAY—POOR PIKE!

HUNSTON quailed. He was lost.

So suddenly—so unexpectedly had this happened, that he was utterly powerless to help himself.

Had he been wearing the mechanical arm, he might have been able to tackle the wiry officer Pike.

Bitterly did he curse his unlucky fate.

Recovering himself, however, in some slight degree, he endeavored to shake off the detective's hold.

"Quiet, now, quiet, Master Hunston," said Pike, "or I shall have to try means for tranquilizing you which you won't find agree with you."

"Show me your warrant for this outrage," said Hunston.

"Outrage! Hoity, toity! that's a good word."

"I shall call the police to my assistance if you attempt to molest me," said Hunston, putting on a lofty air.

This tickled Pike mightily.

"Call the police, will you?" he said. "Well I sha'n't, for I flatter myself that I don't want much assistance to walk off with such a man as you—even if you were not lopsided."

Hunston turned savagely upon the detective at this allusion to his crippled state, and made an attempt at using his one arm upon him.

But Pike was—to put it vulgarly—all there.

He dexterously dodged the blow, and, whirling around, secured a hold upon Hunston's collar—that peculiar grip which is the speciality of men who have been in "the force."

Hunston struggled desperately to get free.

In vain.

Do what he would, he found himself being trotted along to save himself from strangulation. Not only was it physically painful.

Hunston had an overweening sense of his own importance and dignity, and this being run in like some paltry pickpocket in a crowd, was galling to his vanity beyond all description.

What could he do?

He was powerless.

The wondering people stared at this singular exhibition, but they parted their ranks as Pike and his prisoner came along, and never offered to interfere.

Now, during this brief but painful business, Hunston's thoughts ran right ahead of the present dilemma.

He endeavored to realize some of the possible consequences of it.

The arrest was, he felt sure, illegal.

What then?

What could result from such a proceeding?

Would they detain him?

Could they?—that was the question.

The British ambassador might be influenced by people of the rank and position of the Harkaways.

This granted, it was easy enough for his excellency to waive legal forms and ceremonies there, and get Hunston transferred to the safe keeping of the English authorities.

At this point, Hunston could not repress a shudder.

And why? He thought of what must necessarily follow.

His fevered fancy flew ahead, and he saw himself in the dock faced by the stony-faced judge and put through the torture of cross-examination which laid bare the innermost recesses of his black heart in spite of himself.

He saw further on yet.

He shut his eyes as he went on and heard the tramp of the twelve jurors re-entering the court in the midst of a profound and awesome silence.

He heard the solemn formula; he heard the hollow voice of the foreman give the verdict.

"Guilty!"

All this he heard and saw in his mind's eye, in that brief but unpleasant hustling he had to go through at the hands of the ungenerous and indefatigable officer, Daniel Pike.

And Hunston, now being half cowed by his captor, was being driven through the streets like a lamb to the slaughter, when a sudden and startling incident changed the whole spirit of the scene, even in the twinkling of an eye.

A musket, grasped in a strong hand by the barrel, was swung over their heads, and down it came with an awful crack upon poor Pike's head.

Down he dropped, like a bullock under the butcher's pole-axe.



And Hunston was free.

For a few seconds he could not realize his release, so sudden and unexpected had it been.

"Come along," said a voice in his ear; "away with you, or we shall get into trouble here." This aroused him.

He recognized the voice of Tomaso the brigand, and it brought him to his presence of mind.

Off he started at a good brisk run in the direction that his preserver had taken.

And soon was out of danger.

But Tomaso was not so fortunate.

Following Hunston at a more leisurely pace, he had not gone many yards, when a firm grip was laid on his shoulder.

"Halt!" said a voice.

The brigand turned hastily, and found himself in the firm clutch of the detective.

"I have caught you at last, villain!" exclaimed Pike, the detective, as he twisted his hand into the collar of the garment Tomaso wore instead of a shirt.

Then, before the astonished brigand had time either to remonstrate or resist, the Englishman exhibited to him that particular form of wrestling known as the "cross-buttock," and stretched him at full length on the ground.

Another moment and a pair of real Bow street handcuffs snapped on Tomaso's wrists.

"Neatly done; don't you think so?" said Pike.

Tomaso's answer was a tremendous Greek oath.

"You are swearing, I believe. Now that is a bad habit at all times, and very foolish just now, because you see it don't hurt me, inasmuch as I don't understand it," said Pike, who, after a brief, stern survey of his capture, added:

"If you cursed me in English, though, I don't know but what I might be tempted to punch your ugly head."

Tomaso remained silent, and Pike, after pausing some seconds, helped him to his feet.

"Now you are all right, and will come back quietly with me. But how do the bracelets fit? I've got another pair in my pocket."

"You had better release me," observed Tomaso.

"Now that is very ridiculous, my friend. Why should I take the trouble of capturing you, if I let you run again directly?"

"It will be much to your disadvantage to imprison me, Signor Englishman. An injured Greek is always avenged in some way."

"Just so; however, I'll risk that."

Pike's coolness added to the rage of the brigand, whose passion fairly boiled over.

"May all the infernal gods my forefathers worshiped—may the fiend I—"

"Serve," suggested Pike.

"The fiend I would willingly serve, or sell my soul to for vengeance, visit you with his direst displeasure, and may all the plagues of Egypt blight you!"

"Thank ye, that's a very pleasant speech; something like what I used to hear at the theater. But, old friend, you made one little blunder."

"You will see if I have blundered."

"One little blunder, when you spoke of selling your soul. Lor' bless you, Old Scratch isn't such a fool as to buy it nowadays, whatever he may have done years ago."

Another angry exclamation from Tomaso.

"You see the old gentleman has gained some experience as a trader, and he knows well enough that if he waits a little time, he'll get you all, free gratis for nothing at all."

"You are a devil, Englishman."

"And you are not exactly an angel. However, if I am a devil, you may consider you are regularly sold to me. So now come along; keep your hands under your cloak, and no one will notice the little decorations on your wrists."

"You are a devil, Signor Englishman; but you will die for this."

"Pshaw! I've collared scores of desperate villains, and they all said something of the same kind, yet here I am."

"You will die," repeated Tomaso.

"Some day, of course; but we have a proverb in England; would you like to hear it?"

Tomaso tossed his head with lofty indifference.

"The proverb," continued Pike, "is that 'Threatened men live long.'"

He then took Tomaso by the arm, and led him on.

"But stop," said he; "those pistols in your girdle are very heavy. I'll carry them for you, and the knife as well."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DECOY—A THROW OF THE DICE—THE EXECUTION.

BEFORE Pike and his captive had gone far on their return journey, Harkaway and Harvey, with two or three of the gens d'armes, and a minute after, Jefferson, came up.

"You have caught him then. Hurrah!" said Dick Harvey.

"But this is not Hunston," said Harkaway.

"No, sir; he managed to get clean away. But we'll have him yet."

An old goatherd, who had scrambled down near to the place where the captor and prisoner stood, might have been seen to indulge in a contemptuous smile.

We say might, because the fact is that all were so much elated at the capture of Tomaso, that the very presence of the stranger remained unnoticed.

Nor did he seem to court attention, but remained behind a bush, in a spot, however, where he could hear all that passed.

"Well, we must take this fellow back to the town, and hand him over to the authorities," said Harvey.

"And then hunt down Master Hunston," remarked old Jack. "I wish we knew where to look for him."

"He took this direction," remarked Pike.

"True."

"And, therefore, it is in this direction that we must look for him."

"Right again," remarked Dick Harvey. "But as he is associated with some desperate fellows, it would be as well to place this gentleman in the hands of the authorities before we seek him. It is not good to go into action with prisoners on our hands."

As all agreed on this point, they walked back with the prisoner, and had the pleasure of seeing him put into a cell from which, apparently, there was no way of escape, even the fire-place having been bricked up since the attempt of Mathias to gain freedom that way.

By the time that was done it was too late to think of starting that day, so our friends retired to hold a council of war.

Pike, however, took no part in the consultation.

That astute detective had formed in his own mind a resolution, that if it were possible, he would capture Hunston single-handed, thus covering himself with glory, and at the same time keeping the Harkaways and Harvey out of danger.

Pike knew that it was a difficult thing to keep them out of danger, and that if they heard anything about the brigands, they would be the very ones to lead an attack.

Pike walked up and down, smoking and reflecting on the difficulties which surrounded his task.

He had not thoroughly matured his plans when the sun went down and the moon arose.

Few people were abroad.

The audacity the brigands had recently displayed, had convinced most people that they were safer indoors than out.

As Pike walked up and down the quiet street, he noticed an old man crouched up in a corner, wrapped in a tattered cloak, and apparently intending to pass the night there.

"Halloo, my friend, what are you? Are you one of the brigands?"

Pike uttered the words in a jocular manner, but the old man felt deeply offended.

"Sir Englishman, you insult me."

"I apologize. I had no intention of doing so."

"A brigand! Signor, I am here—houseless and penniless in my old age through those accursed villains! May Satan fly away with their souls!"

"Well, old man, perchance you will be avenged before long."

"It is what I pray for. They burned my hut, cut down my two fine olive trees, and drove off my little flock of goats."

The old man covered his face, and appeared to sob violently.

"When was this?" asked Pike.

"Scarce three hours since."

"Was there with them a foreigner—one of my country?"

"I know not what country they were of, but besides the Greeks, there were two men who seemed leaders; one was called Signor Toro, the other was named Hunston."

"How many were there in all?"

"Three Greeks besides the two foreigners."

"Do you know anything of the haunts of these brigands, friend goatherd?"

"Ay, well. But till now I have never dream-

ed of betraying them, for they never before molested me."

"Lead me to their den."

"You, signor? Why, they are at least five in number, and you are but—"

"But an Englishman! That makes all the difference, friend goatherd, so pray lead on. Here, take a drink from my flask first."

The old man accepted the proffered drink, and then said:

"Well, signor, it is a desperate and a dangerous undertaking; but I know you English can do almost anything, so I will show you the way. And if it comes to a fight, I shall be at your elbow, signor."

"True."

Without mentioning his intentions, or saying a word to any of his friends, the detective passed his arm through that of the goatherd and walked away.

Little conversation passed.

The detective was full of hopeful anxiety about the capture of Hunston, and as for the goatherd, it may be presumed that the loss of his goats afforded him plenty of food for silent reflection.

They passed the place where Tomaso was captured, and then turned aside out of the road into a dense wood which covered the side of a rocky hill.

It appeared as though the old goatherd was "out of condition," as the athletes say; at all events, the scramble up the rough path brought on a loud and distressing cough.

"Be quiet," said Pike; "you will alarm them."

"No fear of that, signor, we are more than a mile from the den of the villains."

So they scrambled and climbed away, till at length they reached a place where Pike found it necessary to use hands as well as feet to make progress.

He had just put up both hands to grasp a boulder over which it was necessary to climb, when, to his intense astonishment, each wrist was grasped by a couple of strong hands, and in another moment he was forcibly dragged up.

"The tables are turned now, Mr. Pike," said a voice. "You will remain our prisoner till Tomaso is released."

It was so dark that Pike could not see the speaker; but he had no doubt that it was Hunston.

The impression was confirmed in an instant by the goatherd, who said in a jeering manner:

"Ha—ha—ha! Why don't you capture him? You were so very brave to talk, yet you do nothing."

Pike, by a sudden jerk, wrenched himself from his captors, and dealt the mocking brigand—for he was nothing more—a blow that doubled him up among the rocks.

But before the detective could escape, he was thrown down himself, and bound hand and foot.

Half a dozen Greek brigands then raised him and bore him away.

How far he could not tell, but it seemed, as far as he could guess, five or six miles.

At length they reached a little open glade in the forest, where at least a score of brigands were assembled.

"You have him, then?" said a huge fellow, who spoke with an Italian accent.

"Yes."

"Tie him to that tree."

It was done.

"Now listen," said Toro—for he it was who had given the command. "If Tomaso is not at liberty and here among us by noon, you shall die."

"I cannot set him at liberty."

"You can do a great deal towards it. Unfasten one of his arms—his right arm."

Pike's right arm was then released, and, in obedience to Toro's command, a small table was placed close to him.

On this table were pens, ink and paper.

"Now write to your friend Harkaway, and tell him that unless Tomaso is released by noon, as I have told you, death is your doom."

So Pike wrote:

"I am in the hands of the brigands, and unless Tomaso is released by noon, I shall be killed. But I am not afraid to die; hold your captive fast."

Having signed it, he held it out to Toro, who read it, and then called a messenger, to whom he entrusted it for delivery.

Then the brigands sat down to breakfast, and Pike was left to his contemplations.

These, as may be imagined, were not of the most pleasant kind.

Hour after hour passed.

The brigands were some sleeping, some play-



ing cards, and all enjoying themselves in some way; but no one took any notice of the prisoner.

The sun rode high in the heavens, and it was evidently approaching noon, when the messenger returned from the town with a letter.

It was addressed to Pike, but Toro opened it.

It was not from Harkaway, but from the chief of the police, informing the unfortunate detective that the Greek government declined to make any terms or drive any bargain with brigands, but that any ill usage Mr. Pike might suffer would be most effectually avenged.

"You hear this?" said Toro.

"I do."

"Then say what prayers you remember, and make your peace with Heaven, for at noon you die."

"Let me be the executioner," said a brigand who stood by.

"Not so," exclaimed another; "the task is mine by right."

"Peace!" said Toro. "The dice shall decide his fate. The highest thrower shall have the pleasure of shooting him."

The brigands, in obedience to a signal from the chief, gathered around him, a short distance from the prisoner.

Dice were produced and the game began.

"Double four!" exclaimed the first thrower.

"That man stands a good chance of being my executioner," thought Pike. "To fancy that I, who have been the terror of evil-doers in England, should be the sport of these dirty brigands. Why, I could well thrash half a dozen of them in a fair stand up fight."

At this moment a loud peal of laughter greeted the second dicer.

"Ace—two!"

"My chance is worthless," said the man.

"Worthless!" muttered Pike to himself. "Ay, you are indeed worthless compared with some of the English villains I have hunted down and fought for life or death. I could die like a man, if I only had to die in a fair hand-to-hand fight with such a man as Birmingham Bill, the very first murderer I ever coped with; but I'll show them how an Englishman can die."

"Double six!" shouted one of the brigands as he threw the dice.

The man was the smallest and ugliest of the lot, but it seemed very probable that he would be Pike's executioner. At all events, he carefully loaded his carbine.

"To be shot by such a villain as that!" thought Pike. "It would have been better if one of the shots fired by that burglar fellow they called the 'Whitechapel Devil' had taken effect; six times he fired, and then we had a good ten minutes' tussle before I could secure him."

At length all the brigands had thrown with the exception of Toro.

"Double six again!"

As it was a tie between the two, each had another throw. The little ugly brigand threw.

"Two—three!"

Toro then took up the dice, shook them well in the box, and made his cast.

"Five—four!"

And Toro was hailed the winner.

"Prisoner, I give you two minutes to prepare."

"Brigand, I am prepared. Such sins as I have committed I have repented of; so do your worst, but rest assured that vengeance will some day overtake you. To Heaven I commend my soul!"

With as much composure as if he had been practicing at an inanimate target, Toro raised his gun and counted:

"One—two—three!"

At the word three, he pulled the trigger. The report echoed from rock to rock, and the head and body of poor Pike fell forward, as far as the ropes that secured him to the tree would permit.

He was dead, the bullet having penetrated the brain.

\* \* \* \* \*

That evening, as Harkaway, Harvey, and Jefferson returned from an unsuccessful attempt to arouse the authorities, they found that two men had left a heavy package at the house.

On opening it, they were horrified to find it a section of a hollow tree, nearly every portion of the wood having crumbled away, leaving the bark intact.

And in the hollow was the body of the poor detective, and a brief note:

"The fate of all brigand hunters. Beware!  
"TORO."

"Vengeance for this, at all events," exclaimed Harkaway; "poor Pike! We should be unworthy of the name of Englishmen did we not punish thy murderers."

He then wrote to the mayor of the town a note.

"SIR:—In the huge package that accompanies this note, you will find the body of an Englishman, who has this day been murdered by brigands; I call upon you, in the name of Heaven, to rout these murderers out of their dens, and bring them to justice. Should you show any backwardness in so doing, I shall deem it necessary to appeal to the English ambassador."

"Your obedient servant,

"J. HARKAWAY."

Having dispatched a couple of messengers with the body and letter, they sat down with sorrowful hearts and small appetites to their evening meal.

## CHAPTER XI.

HUNSTON IN THE CAMP AGAIN—RETROSPECTION—A DEVILISH PLOT—DARK CLOUDS GATHER OVER THE HARKAWAYS.

"Who goes there?"

"A friend."

"The word?"

"Mathias."

"Stand; advance a step, and I fire. Ha! I see you now. I did not recognize your voice, Hunston."

"I thought not; but why all this precaution?"

"Fear has induced us to change the countersign. We believe there is mischief abroad, and so extra precautions are needed."

"Right, Ymeniz," said Hunston, who had been out scouting for a few hours after the execution of Pike; "although it is to be feared that the blindness which prevents your recognition of a friend and comrade may mislead you as to the real character of an enemy, should one dare to penetrate thus far."

The sentry laughed.

"Fear nothing on that score, Hunston," he said.

"Indeed, I do."

"My carefulness may turn even friends into enemies, but fear, or over-carefulness—"

"It is much the same thing," suggested Hunston.

"Right; but it is not likely to make me take foes for friends."

"I doubt it."

"You have a cunning tongue, friend Hunston," said the sentry, who was just a little bit nettled; "but I don't believe that you could prove that to my satisfaction."

"I might do it to the one or the other," returned Hunston, caustically; "but certainly not to both; the two are so opposed."

This was just a dash too subtle for the sentry; and so Hunston passed on without further remark.

A few steps further on he came to a group formed of the brigands gathered around Pedro, a brigand who had been of some little assistance in the rescue of Hunston, but who, like Tomaso, had managed to escape.

He was recounting the late adventures—from his own episode in the tale—of Hunston.

Hunston walked up to the center of the group.

"Pedro," he said, "you rescued me, and perhaps saved my life; accept my hand, and with it my eternal gratitude."

Pedro stepped back.

He winced instead of taking the proffered hand, and his countenance fell.

"Pardon me, Hunston," he said; "I'm very glad to have been of service to you, to have been able to save a comrade, but—"

He paused.

Hunston frowned.

"But what?"

"Don't be too grateful."

The tone, no less than the nature of the request, sounded just a little bit comical, and it made the bystanders, Hunston included, smile.

"What do you mean by that, my preserver? Why should I not be grateful?"

"Because I have heard it said that your gratitude brought bad luck to any one who had really befriended you."

Hunston started.

He thought of Robert Emmerson.

That arm did its inventor's work well indeed.

Not a day passed, but Hunston realized the truth of the legend inscribed on the mechanical arm.

Not a day passed, but that he saw how fearfully was the legacy of vengeance bequeathed by the murdered Protean Bob being carried out.

Dropping his glance in some confusion for a moment, he turned sharply upon the brigand after a little reflection.

Pedro could know nothing of the death of Emerson.

Nay, it was more than probable that the very name was utterly unknown to these men.

"You wish to insult me, Pedro," he said, "and so cancel the obligation I am under to you. But beware of going too far, for you may leave a balance upon the wrong side, and I am as quick to avenge an insult, as to—"

Pedro interrupted him with a laugh.

"What did I say? I have only just rendered you a great service—at least, so you say—"

"—And mean?"

"—And mean, perhaps; and yet you are already threatening me. When I said that your gratitude is said to bring bad luck to any one, I was only repeating an idle saying—as I thought—but it seems like the truth, after all."

Hunston was moving thoughtfully away, when the brigand's words stopped him.

"Forgive me, Pedro," he said, turning around; "I am a bad, ungrateful man; but I am not utterly wanting in decent feeling. You touched me on a very sore spot, a very sore spot."

So saying, he walked on, leaving Pedro staring after him.

"That's a queer lot," muttered the brigand to himself, "a very queer lot. I think I would sooner have the murder of a priest on my conscience than be weighted with the deeds that he'll have to answer for."

Pedro was no fool.

His observations were pretty well to the point.

Hunston felt the pangs of remorse.

Daily, hourly, in fact, he looked back and thought of what he was and what he might have been, had not his vicious propensities got the upper hand of him at the critical turn in his career.

And so the demon remorse played havoc with him already.

The mechanical arm was responsible for all. Its mysterious disorganization had been the direct cause of his forced inactivity.

What gives ugly thoughts such power over one as bodily inactivity?

Nothing.

Robert Emmerson, your vengeance is as terrible as it is unceasing in its action.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hunston sought the widow of Mathias.

"I have made good progress, Diana," he said, "for I have learned enough about the enemy to make sure of getting some of them at least into our power."

The listener's eyes glistened at the words.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"What do you propose to do, then? Tell me."

"Harkaway has a son—a mere youth."

"I know it."

"Well, this boy is a dare-devil, bold and fearless lad; nothing can daunt him. He is, in fact, what his hated father was when first I knew him, years and years ago."

A faint and half-suppressed sigh escaped him as he uttered this.

"What of this boy?"

"This boy has a companion called Harry Girdwood."

"Well?"

"Well, these two boys are to be trapped, if it be gone about carefully—very carefully, mark you."

"That can be done, of course."

"It can—by you."

Diana stared again at this.

"By me?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Listen. They pay a certain respect to us—hold us in some fear, in fact—and the boys, who are regular rovers, like their parents and friends, have only permission to cruise about in their little yacht."

"How did you learn this?"

"From Marietta, the servant of the Harkaways."

"Hah!"

"Now, with care, the boys might be lured, perhaps, away from the part of the coast which they know, and let them once touch the shore out of sight and hearing of their friends—"

"I see—I see!" ejaculated the widow of Mathias. "I can entrap them, I believe. But tell me first, what is the object of securing these two boys?"

"The object?" ejaculated Hunston. "Why, surely that is clear enough. Let us once get hold of them, and we can make any terms we please with the father and friends. We shall have to dictate the conditions, and Harkaway will have no choice but to accept them."

"I see—I see!" cried Diana, excitedly. "Leave



the rest to me; I'll undertake to get them into our power."

"How?"

"No matter how; you have done your share of the business. Be mine the task to secure the rest."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"Good!" said Hunston, gleefully, "good! I feel a presentiment of luck. I'm not superstitious, but I feel as certain now that we shall succeed—as certain as if the boys were already in our power."

"They shall be," returned the woman, solemnly, "they shall be. I swear it!"

## CHAPTER XII.

JACK AND HARRY GIRDWOOD AFLOAT—THE SQUALL—THE SHIPWRECKED BOY—DEEDS OF HEROISM—THEIR REWARD—A DEADLY PERIL.

"DOWN with the sail, Jack; we shall be over if we are not sprightly," said Harry.

Young Jack laughed.

The thought of danger actually made him merry, and so proved that he was every inch a Harkaway—a thorough chip of the old block.

"There's no fear, old fellow," he said.

A sudden gust of wind caught the sail, and caused the boat to give such a lurch at this very moment that both the boys were sent flying.

They got some hard knocks.

But neither were afraid of a little rough usage, and so they only scrambled to their feet, laughing boisterously, as if there was great fun in barked shins and bruised arms.

"I told you so, Jack," said Harry Girdwood.

"No harm done," retorted Jack, rubbing a damaged part and grinning.

"No, but don't let us be too foolish; we might get into trouble."

Young Jack roared at this.

"Soho—ho!" he cried. "Shipped another passenger, Harry, have you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you've got Captain Funk aboard."

"Not I," returned Harry, "only if we get into any foolish scrape, they won't let us come out for a sail again, and as this is the only jaunt left us, we may as well keep ourselves quiet."

"There's something in that," said young Jack.

So saying, he set about reefing the sail with all possible dispatch.

Now it was barely accomplished when a violent gust of wind drove the little craft along at a furious rate.

It was only just in time.

A moment more and the sail would have been shredded, or, what was still worse, the boat would have been capsized for a certainty.

Harry Girdwood lowered the oars and pulled sharply along before the fury of the gale, while young Jack bailed out a little water that had been shipped in the first heavy lurch, before the youthful mariners had been fully prepared for such violent treatment, and steered at the same time.

In this way they contrived to elude the violence of the gale, for the present, at least.

But the danger was by no means overcome.

They had not got through the worst of their trouble as yet, little as they anticipated any serious danger.

The gale had come on with strange suddenness, and the truth was that they could hardly realize the extent of their danger.

It was great.

There was, perhaps, a special providence in their ignorance of their real peril, for their coolness alone gave them any chance in the present emergency.

They were brave boys both—never were there braver—yet it is no disparagement of them to say that there was very great probability of their losing their *sang froid* if they had known how very critical their position actually was.

As it happened, they did the very best thing to do under the circumstances.

They kept their boat before the wind, and by vigorous rowing, they contrived to drive along at a rate which was literally tremendous.

And so on they scudded for about ten miles, when the wind dropped a little, and the pace began to tell upon them both.

"Keep her off shore, Jack," cried Harry Girdwood.

"Right."

The wind and rain had half blinded young Jack, and although he said "right," he steered decidedly wrong.

He could not see where they were going.

"Look out!"

Harry Girdwood only just spoke in time for young Jack to take heed of the warning, for a minute later, and they shot past some sharp, jagged rocks, into which they would inevitably have dashed, but for a lucky tug at the rudder at the very last moment.

Now the roar of the wind and waters had just begun to lull a little, when a loud cry for help was heard.

And then, for the first time, they perceived that a boat had just been launched by a boy at not more than thirty yards along the beach, and, being carried out to sea by a huge receding wave, had become unmanageable.

They could see with half an eye that the boy had no skill in handling a boat.

"Help—help!" cried the strange lad, waving his hand in distress towards their boat.

"All right," shouted young Jack; "we're there."

Harry Girdwood pulled vigorously towards the venturesome youth.

A few strokes brought them within twenty feet of the imperilled youth, and he would have been got away in safety, but for his own folly and imprudence.

"Sit still," shouted young Jack; "sit still!"

"He'll be overboard," ejaculated Harry, glancing over his shoulder.

The words of the latter proved but too prophetic.

A cry from young Jack—a piercing shriek from the other boat.

When Harry Girdwood glanced over his shoulder again, he saw the other boat keel upwards, floating away.

The unfortunate youth, its late occupant, was nowhere to be seen.

"He's gone!"

"He has," cried young Jack, starting up, "and by all that's unlucky, he can't swim. Pull on, pull hard! Pull, for mercy's sake!"

And young Jack stood up in the boat, tearing off his jacket and waistcoat.

"What are you after?" exclaimed Harry.

"I'm in after him."

"Jack—Jack, you'll never live in this heavy sea."

"Never fear, old boy, I'll try."

"You shall not, I say. You—"

"Here goes," cried young Jack.

And before Harry Girdwood could interfere, over he went, head first, into the boiling waves.

Harry Girdwood held his breath in sheer fright.

He shipped his oars, and peered over the boat's side.

Where was he?

Would he never come up?

Oh, Heaven! what a fearful time seemed that the intrepid boy was under water.

It seemed an age.

In reality it was but a minute, no more, before young Jack struck up to the surface.

He struck out with one hand—the other grasped something.

"Harry."

"Yes, Jack."

"I've got him."

"Hold tight."

"I mean to," responded young Jack, with great coolness, all things considered.

And now Harry could see that Jack's left hand was twined in the black, flowing hair of the half senseless boy.

The latter had no sooner reached the air and gulped down a breath or two greedily, than consciousness came partly back, and he threw his arms about his preserver and struggled desperately.

"Let go," cried young Jack. "Let go, or we shall both go down together."

But it is not easy to reason with a drowning man.

Young Jack found himself now in a desperate strait indeed.

The frantic efforts of the rescued boy impeded his movements, entirely baffling the heroic Jack's best efforts.

Harry Girdwood saw it all, and his terror increased every moment.

Well it might.

The mad struggles of the stranger imperilled both.

"Dive, Jack, dive," cried Harry Girdwood, frantically; "dive with him or it is all up with both of you."

Jack heard him.

Twisting like an eel in the embrace of the boy he would save, he dived down, dragging the stranger with him.

In the space of a few seconds, he reappeared

again upon the surface, observing his former tactics.

Striking out with his right arm, while with his left hand he grasped the stranger's long black hair.

"Catch hold of him," gasped young Jack; "never mind me."

Harry Girdwood leaned over the boat's side, and caught at the stranger by the collar.

"There; hold on like that," said young Jack.

The weight coming all upon one side of the boat, however, threatened to capsize it, and so they had to act with the greatest precaution.

Young Jack, however, struck out and swam around the boat, so that his weight, clinging upon the further side of the boat, served to steady it while Harry Girdwood completed the rescue of the stranger.

"Bravo!" cried young Jack.

"It was a tough job," said Harry.

"And a narrow squeak for all three of us."

"Right; but let's look after this poor fellow. He's alive."

"Yes."

"I'm glad of that; it would have been precious hard after all the work, not to mention the risk run, to have let him slip his cable in spite of us."

"Well, it is not his fault that he's alive now."

"Alive," quoth young Jack, "by George! He looks more dead than alive as it is."

"Don't fear for him, Jack; he's as good as twenty dead men so far, but how are you getting on?"

"Hearty. Rather damp outside, nothing more."

"And inside?"

"Damp too. Why, I shipped a bellyful of salt water last drop down; enough to salt a barrel of junk."

Harry turned his attention to the stranger.

"He keeps insensible a very long time," he said to young Jack; "it begins to look serious."

"Move the seat," said young Jack, "and let us lay him flat down upon his back at the bottom of the boat. I have always heard that that is the proper thing to do."

No sooner said than done.

Presently they were rewarded for their pains by detecting a faint breathing.

"How white his neck is," said Harry Girdwood.

"And how small and delicate his hands," said young Jack.

"One would almost take him for a woman."

"He'd pass very well for one if he wore petticoats."

"I'm almost inclined as it is to think that—"

"Ha! He's coming round."

The youth opened his eyes and stared about him.

He looked half scared at first one and then the other.

"You are better now," said young Jack, taking his hand.

He stared.

Jack had spoken in English in his anxiety.

He put the same sentiment into the best Greek he could muster.

"Yes—yes," replied the stranger, "better—better," and then he appeared to grow more and more confused; "but what is this? Have I been ill?"

"Yes."

"Ha!"

"Not very; it is all well now. Don't you remember—"

The rocking of the boat furnished the missing link in the chain of memory, and the rescued boy showed, by a ray of intelligence in his bright face, that it had all come back to him.

A smile of grateful acknowledgment of their services shot over his countenance.

Then suddenly his expression changed.

"Where are we going?" he demanded, with the most extraordinary eagerness.

"Ashore."

"Oh, no—no—no!" he exclaimed; "not ashore here."

"Why not?"

"You must not go ashore here," said the youth, eagerly. "Not for worlds."

"Why?"

Jack was questioning the stranger, while Harry Girdwood shot the boat into a favorable creek.

Harry jumped out.

"Come along, he said, cheerfully; "safe on shore."

"And precious glad of it," added young Jack.

The stranger looked upon him in anxious expectation, and, finding they were alone, he turned eagerly to his young preservers.



"Put off again," he said; "put out to sea, I tell you."

"Why?"

"You have disarmed me; you have saved my life and shown me tenderness and care—ay, brotherly love. Oh," he added, earnestly, "pray go now; at once, while you are free."

"Well," quoth young Jack, with a long whistle, "this is a rum go."

Before another word could be spoken, there was heard a whistle which sounded like the echo of young Jack's note; an answer came from another direction, and half a dozen men sprang forward from no one could see where, and pounced upon the two bold boys, Jack and Harry Girdwood.

"Bravo, Theodora!" cried a familiar voice in English, "you play the part of decoy to perfection. We have got them at last."

Young Jack started.

He turned pale and haggard, looking in a moment to Harry.

"Do you know that voice?"

"I do," replied Harry Girdwood. "We are sold, undone. It is the villain Hunston."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was but a little while after young Jack and Harry Girdwood had been entrapped, when a strange scene took place.

Evening was coming on.

Brigand sentinels had been posted at each path by which their haunt could be approached, and one was perched high above on a flat rock, which overlooked everything without being seen himself except by the very sharpest of eyes.

Hunston, after visiting the outposts and seeing that everything was safe for the night, climbed up to this spot, and seated himself on a large stone.

He felt feverish, and at that elevation he might feel something of the breeze, a thing unknown down below at the bivouac, which was closely surrounded by thick bushes.

Strange dreads and doubts filled Hunston's mind, dread of the future, dread of a lingering illness through his arm, which daily grew worse, dread of death, which he felt convinced must be the end, and doubts whether eventually his enemy Harkaway would not triumph.

For Hunston's hatred of Harkaway knew no abatement; living or dying, the same fierce, unquenchable thirst after vengeance would fill his soul.

But what troubled him most now was his health.

The shoulder to which the mechanical arm was attached was so painful it could scarcely bear the pressure of the clothing he wore; the blood in his veins, after flowing through that part of his system, seemed to return to his heart heated almost to boiling point, but that heat did not stimulate him to exertion.

On the contrary, he felt languid and scarcely able to do the duties that devolved upon him as Toro's lieutenant.

Nor was his brain so clear as in former days.

Ideas he had in plenty, but they seemed to jostle and confuse each other in their endeavors to settle down into a connected train of thought.

Emmerson's vengeance was working.

As he sat there, the sentinel remained motionless, leaning on his carbine and peering over the edge of the precipice.

Presently Diana, the widow of Mathias, came up the rock, and Hunston arose to greet her.

"Your husband is to a certain extent avenged," said he.

"How?"

"Harkaway's boy is in our power."

"That is something at all events. That girl, Theodora, the niece of Tomaso, has done her work well. Vengeance has commenced."

"Yes; but—"

"But what?"

"There is a hitch in the proceedings. The girl is soft-hearted, and begged hard for their lives."

"She is a fool! By Heaven, I am half inclined to do the deed myself with this dagger."

"In which case Toro would probably do for you."

"What, is he turned craven?"

"No; but he is sweet on Theodora, and for her sake is inclined to spare them."

Hunston knew well enough that all this was false, as, unless certain conditions were promptly complied with, Toro would certainly kill both of them without the slightest hesitation or compunction.

But he did not tell Diana.

"But," he continued, "what is your idea of vengeance?"

"I would wring other hearts as mine has

been wrung. I would cause blinding tears to dim the brightness of other eyes besides mine. I would cause the stern judge death to pass a decree of divorce upon others besides myself and Mathias. When Harkaway is a widower, or his wife is a widow, then I shall consider my vengeance partly accomplished."

"Humph! for a woman you are tolerably moderate. I shall not be satisfied till the Harkaways and the Harveys are destroyed root and branch—till the other cursed detective, Nabley, his American friend Jefferson, the negroes, the wooden-legged ass Mole, till every one of the party is swept away out of my path. Harkaway taught me to hate, and I swear by all the eternal powers of earth, Heaven and hell, he shall see how I have profited by the lesson."

Diana was silent for a few moments; then, with something like a sneer on her lips, she said:

"You are a brave man—in works, Signor Hunston."

"My acts speak for themselves."

"And little have they said for some time past; but listen. I have sworn a deep and deadly revenge."

"Well."

"This evening I depart."

"Good."

"When I return again, you may expect to hear that Harkaway is dead or his wife."

The excited woman glided away, and Hunston, after smoking a cigarette, followed her.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE HARKAWAYS LEARN ALL—MR. MOLE EXPLAINS AND GETS INTO TROUBLE IN CONSEQUENCE.

WORDS cannot describe the trouble of the Harkaway family at the loss of young Jack and his stout-hearted comrade, Harry Girdwood.

At first their indignation had been so great, that their first impulse was to use violent means to effect the recovery of the boys.

But the first person to oppose this was Jack Harkaway himself.

"If we were to attack them in force," he said, "it would be imprudent upon every hand. In the first place they would have the advantage of us, of course, in a mountain skirmish."

"I don't know that they would get the best of it," said Harvey.

"Nor I," said Jefferson.

"We can do nothing at present as far as I can see," said Harkaway. "Only wait."

"To what end?"

"Their object must be plunder—money—ransom."

"Supposing that they demand a sum?"

"I shall pay it as soon as ever I can rake it up. If it is more than I possess in the world," said Jack Harkaway, seriously, "then I shall borrow of my friends to make it up."

The poor fellow turned away to hide his emotion.

"What guarantee have you that they would give up the boys for a ransom?"

"None. But I should not send the money first. They would have to send the boys here first."

"They might doubt you."

"Why, yes. But Hunston and Toro are with them, and they know that Jack Harkaway's word is his bond, no matter with whom he is dealing, let them be the veriest scum on the face of the earth."

"Which they are."

"Which they are, as you say."

"Very good," said Jefferson. "Now I don't want to play the part of wet blanket, and dash your hopes to the ground before they are half formed, but I wish to prevent starting off on a false tack."

"In what way?"

"All your hopes of ransoming the boys rest now upon the fact of Hunston and Toro being with the brigands."

"Yes."

"Well," added Jefferson, "how do you know that Hunston and Toro are really in the band? You only suppose that."

"I can answer positively, though," said a voice at the door.

They turned.

There stood Nabley, the detective.

"Nabley!"

"Nabley here!"

"Himself," said the indefatigable officer, coming forward. "Hunston is with the brigands, very much with them, in fact."

"That we know," said Harkaway, who then related the death of Pike, and the supposed abduction of young Jack.

"I have been very ill," said Nabley. "I fainted in the street, and in falling, severely injured my head. But do you know how that Hunston finds out all about you and your doings?"

"No."

"Well, it is through one of your own household."

"Explain," said Harkaway.

"What do you mean?" asked Harvey.

"I can't talk much; Mr. Mole will tell you, perhaps, better. Here, Mr. Mole."

Mr. Mole stepped forward, looking just a little sheepish.

"Mr. Mole!"

"Mr. Mole!" exclaimed a dozen voices in a chorus.

"Yes, my friends," said the old gentleman, stepping forward with his well-known modesty. "it is even so, your much wronged Mole."

"Tell us how it occurred," said Harkaway.

"I was down in the dancing garden seated in a species of small summer-house, taking a glass of—I mean a cup of tea, ahem!—when I fell asleep. I dozed, in fact."

"You would," said Harvey; "I've often noticed that you doze after a glass of—I mean a cup of tea."

Mole glared at the speaker.

"The heat of the day quite overcame me."

"It would," said Dick, in the same compassionate manner.

"When I woke up, I heard two persons conversing close by the green arbor where I sat."

"Yes."

"Two familiar voices."

"Ha!" exclaimed Harkaway, eagerly.

"Now guess," said Mole, "who the two familiar voices belong to?"

"Can't."

"Out with it."

"One of the voices," said Mr. Mole, "was Hunston's, the other was—"

"Toro's?"

"No."

"No! Whose then?"

"Marietta's."

"Marietta—what, the maid here?"

"Yes."

"Impossible."

"Was it, egad? I thought so, but I am not easily mistaken."

"Unless you dreamt."

"Bah!" exclaimed Mr. Mole, with ineffable contempt; "fiddlesticks!"

"But did you suppose she was in league with Hunston?" demanded Emily with great eagerness.

"No."

"What then?"

"He was bamboozling her, twisting her round his finger, as one might say. He had got up a casual chat, and persuading her that he was a private friend of yours, and so he pumped and pumped her about the boys, where they went, and so forth."

"And did she say anything that could serve him in his vile purpose?" asked Mrs. Harkaway.

"Plenty to help them, the miscreants, I suppose."

"The girl must be a downright idiot to get into conversation with a strange man after all that has taken place, and after all the danger which she knows they ran."

"Not far short of it," said Jefferson.

"He spoke particularly about the boys not venturing out of the mountains, that they were permitted only to sail about in their boat, and—"

Harkaway broke in here with an exclamation that startled them all.

"That explains all," he said. "All—all, I see it now."

"Do you! Explain."

"They have put out to sea and taken the boys, perhaps by stealth, perhaps by violence."

"Likely enough."

"Poor boys—poor boys!"

"And where did all this take place?" demanded Jefferson; "in one of the public promenades, did you say?"

"Mr. Jefferson," replied old Mole saucily, "you want your nose filed. I said in the dancing garden."

"Oh, de dancing garden, was it, Massa Ikey," said a voice in his ear, which caused him to palpitate nervously.

It was Mrs. Mole.

When he had spoken of the dancing garden, he had noticed his better half's presence.

"Yes, my dear," he said timidly, trying to look dignified the while before the company.



"And what was you doing in such a place as a dancing gardening, Mister Mole, sar!" demanded his dusky rib, in a voice which sounded dangerous.

"I went, my dear, to study character," said Mr. Mole, timidly.

"What?" thundered Mrs. Mole.

He trembled and faltered something almost inaudibly.

"Studyin' character," said the lady with great contempt; "losing your character, you silly old pump—"

"My dear," remonstrated the old gentleman.

"Don't my dear me," said Mrs. Mole, "you're gwine off your silly ole cokernut, you bald-headed old coon."

"Mrs. Mole!"

"You go to dat dancin' gardening for to see dem gals jump about and dance, and make fools'ob demselves, ignorant critters."

"No such thing, I tell you," said Mole, indignantly.

"Oh, yes, it is," said his better half, "and you's a bushel more indelicate dan dey is, you silly ole possum."

This started the company off generally in a noisy fit of laughter, before which poor Mole was forced to beat a retreat, followed by his irate partner.

"Poor Mole," said Jefferson, laughing heartily, "it is an unlucky admission for him. Chloe will give it him sorely for this, I'm afraid."

\* \* \* \* \*

They went deeply into the question of ransoming the boys, for they were convinced that they had really fallen into the hands of the brigands.

But do what they would, say what they would, they could only come back to one result. They must wait.

Patience was difficult under the circumstances, but there was no help for it.

"Wait till to-morrow," said Jefferson; "it is a hard job, I know, but I feel certain that if the boys are with the brigands, to-morrow morning will bring a message from them."

"But can nothing be done meanwhile?" said Emily.

"No."

"Nothing?"

"Stay; you may get some papers printed and circulated everywhere, offering a heavy reward for the recovery of the boys."

"To what end?"

"It can do no harm, and may do good. At any rate, it will show the brigands that we are ready to pay the piper for our boys' sake."

"That's true," said Jefferson.

"Let's do it," said Harkaway, who was pacing up and down impatiently; "at any rate, anything is better than remaining inactive."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

A HOUSE OF MOURNING—THE LETTER FROM THE ENEMY—A STRANGE CORRESPONDENCE—THE INCIDENT AT THE OPEN WINDOW—HUNSTON'S REVENGE—DESPAIR.

It was as Jefferson had predicted.

The notices were printed, and circulated everywhere by well-chosen and energetic agents.

Early next morning, a letter was found fastened to the garden gate.

It was brought to Harkaway, who was already up and busy.

He tore it eagerly open, and found the following written in a disguised hand writing and in English:

"To MR JOHN HARKAWAY.

"If you would save the life of your son and your protégé, his companion, the only way to do it is to bring the sum of five hundred pounds sterling to the stone cross by the old well at two o'clock this afternoon. Those who have the two boys in their keeping will be on the watch. Come alone, as you value your happiness and their safety."

"Not very likely," said Jack Harkaway.

Instead of complying with this very shallow request, he wrote an answer in these terms.

"To HUNSTON AND HIS FELLOW VILLAINS.

"Send the lads back here. Within half an hour of their return, the money shall be sent to where you will and when you will. This I promise, and swear upon my honor. None knows better than yourself that this may be implicitly relied upon.

"HARKAWAY."

This letter he sent by a trusty messenger to the spot appointed for the meeting place, and they waited impatiently for the further result.

It was not long coming.

Before two o'clock, Mariette discovered another letter tied to the garden gate, but how it came there they were unable to decide.

Be that as it may, it was soon discovered to be of the very highest importance to them in the present state of affairs.

It was brief and startling, and ran as follows:

"We do not bandy words with you. We offer our conditions. You refuse. Well and good. The consequences be upon your own head. If the money be not paid by four to-day, at six the boys will lose an ear each."

"The villains!" cried poor Harkaway. "Oh, villains!"

But he was powerless to help them.

He knew well enough that, do what he would, he could not hope to get the boys back without paying, and paying through the nose too.

Nor indeed did he desire to try to achieve this.

The only question was, would they deliver up their prisoners, once they had received the five hundred pounds?

"Perhaps.

Perhaps not.

If not, they would be in as much peril as they were already.

Nay, more.

He guessed shrewdly enough that once they had received such a handsome sum as five hundred pounds, they would think that they had drained him dry, or as nearly so as it was possible to arrive at, and so might make short work of poor Jack and Harry Girdwood.

What was to be done?

He could not say.

He would gladly have risked all that he possessed in the world, for the chance of having his boys back.

Ay, his boys, for Harry Girdwood was second only in Harkaway's affections to young Jack.

But did he not wish to reward the miscreants for ill treating the unfortunate lads.

At length he came to the conclusion that he would persist in his resolve to have the boys back before he parted with any money at all.

Accordingly he wrote another note to the brigands.

This he dispatched by the same means as the former note.

"Release the two lads. Restore them to us, and the ransom of a king shall be yours. Fix upon any sum, however great, provided it be within my means to pay it, and you shall not ask twice. Moreover, I shall do nothing more to molest you, or interfere with you in any way. Play false, or harm a hair of my boys' heads, and beware. You may know that Jack Harkaway is not the man to make an enemy of."

The answer to this was not long in coming.

An ugly scrawl upon a dirty piece of paper, and with it was a small parcel.

"We despise your threats, and laugh you to scorn. That you may know how little we are to be trifled with, we send you their ears in proof that we have kept our word. By this hour to-morrow the two boys die, unless you pay down the sum as fixed upon by us, both in manner and amount."

Jack Harkaway turned faint and sick.

He dare not open the parcel which accompanied the letter.

He sent for Jefferson and Harvey, and unable to trust himself to speak, he placed the letter in the latter's hand.

"Read—read," he said, with a horror-stricken look.

Harvey glanced down the letter, and his countenance fell as he passed it on to Jefferson.

"What is to be done?"

"I don't know," replied Jefferson. "I am at a loss. This is too horrible."

"What do you say, Dick."

Harvey hung his head.

"Speak, Dick. Tell me, old friend, what I ought to do," said Harkaway, imploringly. "I am bewildered—dazed—at my wits' end. What ought I to do?"

"Pay the money."

Accordingly the money, all in gold, was placed in a bag in the spot which they had indicated in the first note addressed by the brigands to Jack Harkaway.

This done, they awaited the result.

It soon came.

Too soon for the latter's peace of mind.

As the family and their friends were seated in moody silence and in sorrow around the dinner table, so strong was the sense of oppression upon everyone that they only conversed in whispers.

"The heat is really overpowering," said Mrs. Harkaway.

"Shall I open the window," asked Jefferson.

"If you please."

He hastened to comply with her request, when at that very instant something shot past him in to the room.

It fell with a clatter upon the table, and cannoned off a dish on to Jack Harkaway, striking him a rather sharp blow in the chest.

"What's that?"

"Halloo!"

"A stone."

"Yes, a stone with a paper wrapped round it."

"So it is."

"A letter, I should think," suggested Dick.

"If so," said Harkaway, smiling sadly, "it is evidently meant for me."

"You have a striking proof of that," said Dick.

Harkaway undid the paper and scanned it through.

His countenance fell as he read on.

His pale face grew pallid, and rising from his seat, he ran, or rather staggered to the window.

"Gone!"

What is the matter?" demanded Dick, jumping up.

"See after the man who threw this letter in," exclaimed Harkaway. "Come with me—come—come immediately!"

And with this somewhat wild exhortation, he tottered out of the room, followed by Dick.

Dismay, alarm, was depicted on every face.

"What can it be?" ejaculated Mrs. Harkaway.

"Oh, Mr. Jefferson, go and see, and bring me the news."

"I will. Calm yourself, my dear Mrs. Harkaway; it is very likely to be good news which thus agitates poor Jack."

Away he went.

"I fear it is the reverse," said Emily, shaking her head.

Jefferson overtook Harkaway and Dick Harvey in the gardens, where an active search was going forward after the man, or individual of either sex, who could have thrown the stone with its strange letter.

"Let me see the letter, Jack."

The latter placed it in his hand, and then, to Jefferson's horror and dismay, he found it contained the following words:

"To HATED HARKAWAY.

"I have had years and years of patience, and my turn has come at last. As your eyes glance at these lines, your boy is vainly supplicating for mercy. Before you reach the signature at foot, your accursed brat will be dead—mark that—dead! No power on earth can save him. Had you sent the money demanded as his ransom promptly, you could have saved him. May the knowledge of this wring your heart as you have wrung mine in bygone years."

"HUNSTON."

The continuation of this story can be found in The 5 Cent Wide Awake Library No. 1243, entitled "JACK HARKAWAY, THE AVENGER."

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